WORDSWORTH IN EARLY AMERICAN CRITICISM

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WORDSWORTH IN EARLY AMERICAN CRITICISM

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WORDSWORTH IN EARLY AMERICAN CRITICISM

By

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TO MY MOTHER

PREFACE

Volumes have been written about Wordsworth, and new books and pamphlets dealing with this poet continue to pour from the press. Modern scholars and critics are constantly setting forth new ideas. Some are trying to prove that Wordsworth was a great philosopher; others are trying "to rescue him from the philosophers." "Wordsworth in a New Light" is a popular subject of the day. Pages omitted by Christopher Wordsworth in his *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* have been supplied by a noted critic in one of the most scholarly studies yet produced. But the attitude of early America toward the poet has remained carefully imprisoned in the yellow pages of old magazines and journals and in dusty volumes of essays and poems. One purpose of this study is to assemble and present the opinions from the sources mentioned that we may know definitely America's early attitude toward Wordsworth.

That Wordsworth's recognition in this country was slow has been generally conceded. The real causes of this belated appreciation, however, have not been given a careful and detailed analysis. Therefore, another purpose of this study is to make an examination of American culture during the first half of the nineteenth century and to show its bearing upon the early fortunes of Wordsworth in this country.

Inasmuch as 1824, the year of the second publica-

tion of Wordsworth's poems in America, marked a turning point in the attitude of this country toward the poet, and inasmuch as practically all the available material dates from this time, I have largely limited the scope of this treatise to the period between 1824 and 1860.

The general idea of making a study of Wordsworth in America was first suggested to me by Mr. Paul Mueschke. Later, the definite subject, "Wordsworth in Early American Criticism," was proposed to me by Professor Solomon F. Gingerich and approved by Professor Fred Newton Scott and Professor Thomas E. Rankin. Each regarded the field as a new one and one worthy of investigation. To Professor Gingerich I wish to express my appreciation for his encouragement and helpful suggestions. To Professor Clarence D. Thorpe and Professor Oscar J. Campbell special acknowledgment is due for time and patience in looking over manuscript and for valuable, definite suggestions for revision. I feel greatly indebted to Professor Rankin for his advice and encouragement. To him I wish to express my appreciation for general supervision, sympathetic interest, and personal counsel.

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CHAPTER I

BASIC MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF THE EARLY FORTUNES OF WORDSWORTH'S WORK IN AMERICA

I

Although Wordsworth, at the end of the period of this study, achieved popularity in this country, and was for a time considered by the American people the leading English poet, he was not always so regarded. He did not achieve immediate favor with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. Before 1824 some of the American people had read Wordsworth's poems. Of this number, only a few admired and approved; and they were afraid to express their opinions. At no time has Wordsworth's popularity with the masses in America equaled that of Scott and Byron's during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, as we shall see as this study proceeds. We cannot pick up the popular magazines of this period, such as the *New York Mirror, Godey's Lady's Book,* the *Gentleman's Magazine,* and *Graham's Magazine,* and find long critical articles on Wordsworth or Wordsworth's poems. I have found only an occasional reference to the poet in those issues of the magazines to which I have had access.

In the succeeding pages I shall show that the history of Wordsworth's work in America corresponds roughly

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with its English reception. It was a history of a work beginning in obscurity and unpopularity and gradually emerging into favor and appreciation. Since America slavishly followed England in all matters, we should not expect her to show critical independence in her acceptance of Wordsworth. Although the American Revolution brought about a political separation from England, the intellectual emancipation from the mother-country did not take place until many years later.[1] For decades after the war, English articles were reprinted in American magazines and governed American literary opinions. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, England and America were still under the influence of the eighteenth-century literary ideals, which they relinquished slowly. At the time of Bryant's birth in 1794, and for many years afterward, Pope and Cowper were more esteemed in America than Homer and Shakespeare. Bryant himself showed the influence of the prevailing eighteenth-century fashions in his poems.[2] We shall see later in this discussion that readers were steeped in the artificiality of the school of Pope and were much interested in thrilling tales of old times and distant lands—stories full of chivalrous achievement, supernatural deeds, and horrors. We shall see that they reveled in the Giaours of Byron and the Baden Knights of Scott, and had a morbid craving for vicious stimulants, a taste which had been pampered by the popular writers of the day.

Before Wordsworth could be appreciated, the taste

[1] See Earl L. Bradsher, *Mathew Carey*, chap. iii.

[2] James L. Onderdonk, *History of American Verse*, p. 172.

for the conventional, artificial, and the exciting had to be counteracted by other influences; a revolution in taste must transpire in both England and America. This revolution was brought about in general by an advance in culture and in particular by the soul-inspiring poetry of Wordsworth itself—a consummation of Wordsworth's conviction that he must "create the taste" for his poetry before it could be appreciated.

The first material upon which to base a study of the early fortunes of Wordsworth in America consists of editions of his poems published in this country from 1800 to 1860. The second class of material consists of criticisms found in the essays and magazines of the period. A third source of information is found in Wordsworth's poems quoted in the American annuals and early readers.[3] A fourth class of material is taken from various documents of our nineteenth-century poets—journals, notebooks, letters, poems, and essays.

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The list of early editions, which has not before been tabulated, is as follows:

1. *Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems.* In two volumes. From the London second edition. Philadelphia: printed by James Humphrey, for Joseph Groff, 1802.

In the "Advertisement" to this edition the editor apologizes for the delay in the publication of the poems and expresses his "thanks to those who have been pleased to favour them with their encouragement by Subscrip-

[3] See chaps. ii and iv.

tion." This edition contains explanatory notes in the back.

That Wordsworth did not become immediately popular upon the publication of the 1802 edition is indicated by the fact that twenty-two years elapsed before another volume of his poems appeared in America.

2. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth.* In four volumes. Boston: published by Cummings, Hilliard and Company, 1824.

This important edition contains the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* and also the Supplement to the Preface. Following the poems are explanatory notes.

After the publication of the edition of 1824, eleven years elapsed before another American edition was published. Beginning with 1835, an edition appeared for three consecutive years.

3. *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems.* Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1835.

Of this edition, while it was still in preparation, the *New England Magazine,*[4] "Literary Annotanda" remarked, "James Munroe and Company have in press Wordsworth's new volume, *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems,* which we have read in the English copy with great delight." The estimate of this same volume, made by the *Knickerbocker*[5] is thus given:

Judging alone from the extracts which we have seen from the present volume, we incline to the belief that it will even add to the fame of its distinguished author. It is pronounced by compe-

[4] 1835.

[5] VI (October, 1835), 378.

tent authority to possess a more prominent and uniform spirit of elegance than can be found in any equal portion of Wordsworth's former work—a nobleness of thought and feeling made vocal in perfectly pure and appropriate language.

4. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth.* The first complete American edition. New Haven: printed and published by Peck and Newton, 1836.

Closely following this first complete edition of Wordsworth came another, this time with notes and a supplementary (prefatory) essay.

5. *The Complete Works of William Wordsworth.* Together with a description of the country of the lakes in the north of England. Now first published with his works. Edited by Henry Reed, professor of English literature in the University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia: James Kay, Jun. and Brother. Boston: James Munroe and Company. Pittsburgh: John Kay and Company, 1837.

In the Preface to this edition, the American editor stated that he had endeavored to follow Wordsworth's "special directions for arrangement." This arrangement is given below:

Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood
Juvenile Poems
Poems Founded on the Affections
Poems of the Fancy
Poems of the Imagination
Miscellaneous Sonnets
Memorial of a Tour in Scotland
Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty
Memorial of a Tour on the Continent
The River Duddon Sonnets
Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems

The White Doe of Rylstone
Ecclesiastical Sonnets
Poems on Naming of Places
Inscriptions
Poems of Sentiment and Reflection
Evening Voluntaries
Poems Referring to the Period of Old Age
Epitaphs and Elegiac Poems
The Excursion

This edition was published again in 1839.

After the publication of the 1839 edition there is an interim of ten years before there appears to be a call for another one. Evidently the supply on hand met the demand. Beginning with 1849, the rapidity and regularity with which various editions of Wordsworth came from our presses strongly attest the poet's growing popularity in America.

6. Wordsworth, William. *The Excursion, a Poem.* New York: Francis and Company, 1849.

7. *Poems by William Wordsworth.* With an introductory essay on his life and writings by H. T. Tuckerman. New York: C. S. Francis and Company. Boston: J. H. Francis, 1849.

This edition was republished in 1855.

This volume contains about one-fifth of Wordsworth's poems. In the Preface the editor stated that his aim was to include the most characteristic and beautiful pieces and that they were arranged more with reference to variety than to the date of their composition or to the order in which they originally appeared. It was believed that the poet's admirers would be glad to recognize their favorites in so convenient a form, while "those less familiar with the muse would be allured to the choice pieces

by the pleasing variety of the present select edition." Among the poems are found seven of the sonnets on the "Punishment of Death." One is not surprised to find the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* omitted. Although certain denominational papers were interested in them, as we shall see in Chapter v, they did not appeal to the general reader. America was not interested in the Church of England.

8. Wordsworth, William. *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind.* New York: Appleton and Company, 1850.

9. Wordsworth, William. *Poetical and Prose Works.* Philadelphia: Kay and T., 1851.

The following three editions are listed in Roorbach's *Bibliotecha Americana* under the years 1820–52. They were probably published in 1851.

10. Wordsworth, William. *Poetical Works.* Philadelphia: Hunt and Son.

11. Wordsworth, William. *Poetical Works.* Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company.

12. Wordsworth, William. *Poems.* New York: Leavitt and Allen.

The next edition of Wordsworth is of special interest to us because it is prefaced by a life of the poet by Lowell.

13. Wordsworth, William. *Poetical Works.* Edited with life by J. R. Lowell. In seven volumes. Boston, 1854.

The sketch of Wordsworth's life which forms the Preface of this edition, with some changes, appears in Lowell's *Among My Books,*[6] and in *Literary Essays.*[7] The essay is written with directness, appreciation, and

[6] Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1876. Pp. 201–52.

[7] Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1895. IV, 354–415.

an imaginative sympathy which have given it high rank.[8]

The next edition of Wordsworth is listed in *Appendix to Roorbach's Bibliotecha,* which covers the period from May, 1853, to March, 1858.

14. Wordsworth, William. *Poetical Works.* Edited by Henry Reed. Philadelphia: Hays and Zell.

15. *Poems from the Poetical Works of William Wordsworth.* New York: Leavitt and Allen, 1856.

This last volume bears the copyright of 1841 and contains a Preface by Henry Reed written from Philadelphia, December, 1841. It is a delightful miniature volume containing fifty-one poems, selected as follows:

Poems referring to period of childhood	4
Poems founded on the affections	5
Poems of the fancy	2
Poems of the imagination	13
Memorials of tours in Scotland	7
Memorials of tour on the Continent	2
Poems of sentiment and reflection	12
Poems referring to period of old age	2
Epitaphs and elegiac poems	3
Ode on Intimations of Immortality	1

When Reed placed the great Ode last, he no doubt had in mind a wish which Wordsworth once expressed, that in a selected group of his poems the favorite poem be placed last. Reed remarked in his Preface that, when asked to make the selection, he thought that the attempt

[8] (*a*) The particular points in Lowell's criticism of Wordsworth will be noted in a later chapter.

b) See *The British Poets,* "Wordsworth," Vol. I. Copyright Little, Brown & Co., 1854. Date of publication, 1859.

to spread what is pure and permanent when there is "such profuse republication of the lighter and more frivolous effusions of English Literature is a matter of congratulation." This edition was put up in a miniature popular form with the idea that in this way the poetry of Wordsworth would become known to some "who otherwise would more slowly gain acquaintance with it," while "to the habitual reader of Wordsworth's poems, this little selection may present in a convenient shape some favorite pieces." Reed hoped that with such an edition the general reader would acquire a taste for Wordsworth and thus be led on to read more of his poems not included in this volume. It is scarcely to be apprehended," he said, "that anyone of ordinary intelligence or imagination, or feeling could (for instance) after reading 'Margaret' or 'The Deserted Cottage' rest contented without seeking the perusal of that great poem, *The Excursion,* from which it has been detached."

The last edition of this period came out in 1859. It is a reissue of the 1854 edition.

16. *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company. New York: Blakeman and Mason, 1859.

A study of the above list suggests that Wordsworth was not popular in America at the beginning of the nineteenth century; and, that beginning with 1824, there was an awakened interest, which gradually increased and reached its greatest height, as far as the poet's early fortunes in America were concerned, between 1850 and 1860.

III

I have found but three American collections of essays of this period containing discussions of Wordsworth. One is entitled, *Thoughts of the Poets* by Henry T. Tuckerman;[9] another volume consists of *Essays and Reviews,* two volumes, by Edwin Percy Whipple;[10] and the third is called, *Lectures on the British Poets,* two volumes, by Henry Reed.[11] Before the essays of Tuckerman and Whipple were published in book form, they had appeared in American magazines. Tuckerman's essay on Wordsworth had appeared in the *Southern Literary Messenger,*[12] and part of it later in the *New Yorker;*[13] Whipple's essay had been published in the *North American Review.*[14] One essay on Wordsworth by Lowell is found in his *Among My Books.*[15] The same essay appears in *Literary Essays.*[16] This essay is an enlarged production of the "Sketch of Wordsworth's Life," which appears as the Preface to the edition of Wordsworth's poems edited in 1854 and 1859.[17] Another essay on Wordsworth by Lowell appears in *Literary Essays,*[18]

[9] New York and Boston, 1846. Pp. 214–25.

[10] Boston, 1853. I, 222–60.

[11] Philadelphia, 1860. II, 199–231.

[12] VII (February, 1841), 105–9.

[13] X (February, 1841), 355.

[14] LIX (October, 1844), 352–88.

[15] Boston, James R. Osgood & Co., 1876. Pp. 201–52.

[16] Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1895. IV, 354–415.

[17] See *The British Poets,* "Wordsworth," Vol. I (1859).

[18] VI, 99–114.

but it belongs to a later period than the one in which we are interested.[19] In three literary essays written in 1854,[20] Lowell makes references to Wordsworth.

The main part of the information concerning America's attitude toward Wordsworth from 1820 to 1860 has been gained from the American magazines of that period. Taking down these old musty, dusty periodicals from the shelves on which they have slumbered peacefully and undisturbed for many years has been a most interesting task. Some of them were so feeble that they had to be tied with a string. Does this fact indicate that they have been hard at work at one time in their careers or that they have become decrepit from non-use? The pages of one article, written in 1848, yellow with age, were not cut until June 4, 1926.

Many of the magazines of the nineteenth century not only exerted an important influence in guiding the literary tastes of the reading public but also were an active factor in the making of American literature. While many of them contain, as we shall see in the next chapter, much that was sensational and characterized by maudlin sentiment, on the other hand, much of the best literature of the time appeared in some of the magazines before being published in book form, and much of the best criticism was originally printed in periodicals. The *American Monthly*[21] once made the following comment: "The highest species of writing is to be looked for in the

[19] *Address as President of the Wordsworth Society*, May 10, 1884.

[20] *At Sea*, I, 101; *Italy*, I, 128–29; *Keats*, I, 225; 231–32; 242–43.

[21] V (February, 1838), 109.

magazines; for these offer a mode of reaching the public mind more direct than the writing of a book. A Quarterly Review will sometimes contain the matter and substance of half a dozen volumes." Much more space was given in the nineteenth-century magazines to the reviews of authors and their works than is given by the magazines of today. Sixty-eight pages are given to one review of Wordsworth,[22] while some other Wordsworth reviews are over twenty and thirty pages in length.

The most important of the serious periodicals of the nineteenth century is the *North American Review*. This magazine was founded in Boston in 1815 and "has had the longest life of all the periodicals (American) now in existence. . . . . The book reviews, especially between 1850–1870, were probably better than in any other American periodical."[23] During the larger part of its career, the *North American Review* was edited by Cambridge men.[24] The contributors to the first forty volumes included many Harvard instructors. The articles which appeared in the *Review* during the first half of the nineteenth century exerted wide influence on political and literary affairs and serve as a fair index of instructed taste. In this investigation, *Wordsworth in Early American Criticism,* I have taken more extracts from the *North American Review* than from any other magazine.

Side by side with the *North American Review* grew

[22] Henry Reed in *New York Review,* IV (1839), 1–69.

[23] Theodore Stanton, *Manual of American Literature, 1607–1906,* p. 449.

[24] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Old Cambridge,* pp. 44–51.

up the *Christian Examiner*. This magazine, though denominational, served as a sort of adjunct to the *Review*. The *Christian Examiner* was established in 1824 and sustained itself with a high reputation for forty-five years. This periodical, which regards Wordsworth distinctly as a "Christian Poet," contains some interesting Wordsworth criticism, which I shall present later.

After the *North American Review*, the *Southern Literary Messenger* furnishes the most reviews of Wordsworth in this period. This magazine, which was published in Richmond, Virginia, from 1834 to 1864, "exerted a marked influence upon the taste of the whole South."[25]

The large number of magazines which came out in the nineteenth century is an indication of the growing intellectual activity among the American people. Besides the Wordsworth articles by American contributors, many reprints from English magazines appeared in the American magazines. As the aim is to present American criticism, only a few of these will be used in the discussion. But the English point of view cannot be disregarded, as it largely colored American thinking.

Nineteenth-century writers seldom signed their magazine articles, or, if they did sign them, they used a nom de plume. Three Wordsworth articles of this period have been found signed in this way. An article in the *Southern Literary Messenger* of 1850[26] is signed "A. M."; one

[25] Theodore Stanton, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

[26] XVI, 474–79.

in the *American Review* of 1851[27] is signed "O. W. W."; and the third article, one which appears in the *Southern Literary Messenger* of 1855,[28] bears the signature of "Cecilia." Only three names have been found signed to Wordsworth articles of this period: those of Henry Reed, H. T. Tuckerman, and Mrs. A. J. Eames.[29] We also know that the unsigned article on Wordsworth in the *North American Review* of October, 1844,[30] was written by E. P. Whipple, since, as, has been pointed out, it appears in his collection of essays.

Whipple, Tuckerman, and Reed were all capable, outstanding critics of the day. Katherine Lee Bates, in her *American Literature,*[31] declared: "Larger criticism, interpretive and comprehensive, ... in our present century began with Edwin Percy Whipple" and "rose to its height in James Russell Lowell." "Whipple's frank and lucid lectures," she maintains, "hold a permanent place in American regard."[32] Barrett Wendell, in his *Literary History of America,*[33] says, "Edwin Percy Whipple was generally recognized as a professional literary critic." Whipple was one of the leading contributors to the *North American Review.* According to the *Literary World* of December, 1848,[34] the *Review* owed its high standing largely to Whipple; "of its many able contributors," no one man "has written so much or so well." In

[27] XIV, 68–80. [28] XXI, 686–88.

[29] Judging from a poem written by Mrs. Eames at the time of Wordsworth's death, she was a genuine appreciator of the poet.

[31] 1897. P. 234. [32] *Ibid.,* p. 235.

[30] LIX, 352–84. [33] P. 438. [34] III, 919.

a second article on Whipple in the same volume,[35] we are told he was "reputed to stand at the head of American critics." Whipple wrote numerous critical essays for *Graham's Magazine,* the *American Review,* the *Christian Examiner,* the *Methodist Quarterly Review,* and the *Atlantic Monthly;* but his collection of *Essays and Reviews* is mostly made up from his articles which had previously appeared in the *North American Review.* In 1848, in recognition of the pronounced success of his literary activities, Whipple was awarded an honorary A.M. degree by Harvard College. In his *Essays and Reviews* Whipple gives able reviews of Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Scott, as the four great exponents of the imaginative literature of the nineteenth century. In his essay on Wordsworth he contrasts the transcendental quality of the poetry of the Wordsworth period with that of the preceding age and points to Wordsworth as the leader and pioneer of the new school. In his discussion of the poetry of Wordsworth he shows a keen insight into and appreciation of its qualities, which he judges in a sane way.[36]

Henry Theodore Tuckerman also received an honorary degree of A.M. from Harvard in 1850. He was a regular contributor to many American magazines, including the *North American Review* and the *Southern Literary Messenger.* In these various magazines origi-

[35] P. 943.

[36] The particular points of Whipple's criticism of Wordsworth's poetry will be considered in chapter iv.

nally appeared his essays—aesthetic, biographical, and critical—which form the bulk of his work.

It was probably due more to the interested efforts of Henry Reed than to any other critic that Wordsworth was first thoroughly made known in this country. Reed was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1825, studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1829; in 1831, he was elected assistant professor of English literature in his university, and in 1835 was made professor of rhetoric and English literature in the same institution. This position he held until his death in 1854.[37] Reed's first essay appeared in 1839 in the *New York Review*,[38] a quarterly held in high esteem in its day. This article, entitled "Wordsworth," containing copious quotations, is a long eulogy on Reed's favorite poet. Since Reed carried on a correspondence with Wordsworth for a number of years, he was able to speak and write from first-hand information. In 1841 Reed delivered in the University of Pennsylvania a series of public lectures on the English poets, the last of which was on Wordsworth. Many attended these lectures, and he was asked to repeat them. This he did not do; but, in 1850, he offered a course in English literature in the University, which practically covered the same ground, and included prose as well as poetry. After Reed's death these lectures were published, together with an edition of Wordsworth's poems.

[37] See the *New American Cyclopaedia* (1862); also lectures on "English Literature" by Henry Reed: Introductory note by William Reed, 1855.

[38] IV, 1–69.

Those who knew Reed said that his conversation invariably turned to Wordsworth. F. C. Yarnall relates that there were at times amusing instances of this. Sometimes, when he was discussing kindred topics—for instance, the poems of Coleridge and Southey, whom he much admired—he always returned to Wordsworth as "the needle to the pole," with an intensity of interest in every detail of the poet's life, character, and opinions most remarkable. "In all the criticism of Reed," this writer continues, "his pure and fine taste, and his excellent scholarship were always discernible, his manner and style very felicitous, and his admiration high."[39]

We have seen that the personnel of the early American critics of Wordsworth was made up of poets and essayists and contributors to the leading magazines of the time. The prevailing custom of not signing magazine articles makes it impossible for us to assign every Wordsworth article to a definite writer; however, the occasional departure from this plan and the fact that some of the criticisms are recognized later in collections of essays of certain authors, enable us to reach the conclusion that the Wordsworth critics belonging to the period of this study include the most outstanding literary reviewers of the time.

Before the varying fortunes of Wordsworth's poetry in America, as revealed in this chapter, can be explained, a thorough examination of American culture during the years under discussion should be made. Such a study as

[39] See letter from F. C. Yarnall on "Wordsworth's Influence in America," in *Transactions Wordsworth Society, No. 5.*

this is fruitful largely for the light which it can be made to throw upon the civilization of America and its points of contact with those ideals and interests expressed in the poet's work. Consequently, it is my purpose to note these tendencies in the following chapter, and, using them as a background, proceed to trace the fortunes of Wordsworth in America, from a period of indifference and unpopularity, through a period of transition, to one of complete appreciation.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF AMERICAN CULTURE DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A. TEMPERAMENT OF THE PEOPLE

I

Certain characteristics of American life impress both visitors from abroad and native critics as outstanding. In fact, they were nigh universal. They appear among both the masses and the so-called "cultured society" of the period. There is a difference, it is true, between these two classes in specific taste: those of the former class are freer, more spontaneous, and, it may be, coarser; while those of the latter class are traditional and decorously restrained. Yet they are both the outgrowth of the American temperament of the first half of the nineteenth century. Despite differences, the trend in each class is a common sign of the time and has its bearing on the literary taste of the period.

De Toqueville's maxim, "A democracy is unsuited to meditation," quoted by Bliss Perry,[1] is especially applicable to the life of the years under discussion. They form a period of transition from an age in which, as Woodberry says,[2] the "soul-life was cramped in archaism of thought and breeding" to one characterized by

[1] *The American Mind,* p. 68.

[2] George E. Woodbury, *America in Literature,* p. 84.

"enlargement—enfranchisement." In these transitional years we find much meaningless excitement, which revealed itself in a society which went from dinner to tea, from tea to supper, from supper to ball, and back to supper again, all after twelve noon, in torch-light processions displaying gay banners bearing significant mottoes, in emotional excitement attendant upon revivals and camp meetings, in swiftly-moving melodrama, in harrowing tales in prose and verse—all significant of the "buoyant spirits of a young, enterprising and prosperous people."[3] Yet in contrast to this life of mere stir or movement, there were to be found the sober, serious, thoughtful, moral, and religious traits. Sometimes, it is true, the religious strain expressed itself in a harmful, emotional excitement; more often it showed itself to be a quiet, undemonstrative, forceful spirit, wisely guiding the fortunes of the people. The latter qualities are those which, in spite of other conflicting tendencies, constitute the backbone of the nation and have the greater weight, as we shall see, in determining the fortunes of Wordsworth in America.

Our early Americans, whether they belonged to the masses or the classes, were, on the whole, sober, honest, hard-working individuals. They, however, had their moods of aesthetic recreation and frequently sought their pleasure in the exciting. This tendency, later pages in the discussion will show, had a direct bearing on literary attitudes.

[3] Fred Lewis Pattee, *The Development of the American Short Story*, p. 42.

II

The first evidence of this proneness to excitement can be found in the social whirl which characterized society during the first half of the nineteenth century. In Washington "society is the very business of life," writes George Ticknor to William H. Prescott, January 16, 1825.[4] Ticknor's visit to the capital city was given over, in the mornings, to visits, and in the afternoons and evenings, to ministerial dinners, balls, and suppers—a "society as agreeable and *exciting* as any in the country." In the same manner, our distinguished visitors, Dickens and Thackeray, were dined and fêted. Dickens[5] was impressed with the loud and cheerful conversation, the unusual amount of poultry on the table at every dinner, and "at every supper, at least two mighty bowls of hot stewed oysters, in any one of which a half-grown Duke of Clarence might be smothered easily."

Thackeray, shortly after arriving in the United States, wrote to his "Dear Lady" (December, 1852)[6] of the rush of life which characterized New York. The

[4] *Life of George Ticknor* (James R. Osgood & Co., 1877), I, 349–50.

[5] (*a*) Charles Dickens, *American Notes and Pictures from Italy* (Gadshill ed.), p. 69.

b) Dickens's first visit to America extended from January 22 to June 7, 1842.

c) Dickens is believed to have made more than $100,000 by his American readings; but the work, worry, and excitement, according to the assertion made by one of his intimate friends, caused his death (James Grant Wilson, *Thackeray in the U.S.*, II, 126).

[6] *A Collection of Letters of Thackeray* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), pp. 159–60.

houses were "always being torn down and built up again; the railroad cars drive slap into the midst of the city. There are barricades and scaffoldings everywhere . . . .; hammerings and clatterings continue and walls and steps are torn down and the family is going to move. Nobody is quiet here." The continuous round of dinner parties almost wore Thackeray out.[7] "Everybody," he wrote, "is introduced and shakes hands. I know thousands of Colonels, professors, educators, and what-not." In despair he exclaims, in a letter written from Baltimore and Washington, February 7, 1853,[8] "Book indeed! How is one to write a book when it is next to impossible to get a quiet half hour?" April 5, Thackeray was back in New York again doing nothing for a week, as he expressed it,[9] but going to dinners and balls. Overcome with so much excitement, he writes to Miss Jane Trulock, in London:

> How I *wouldn't* like the girls to live here! . . . . I never saw such luxury and extravagance, such tearing polkas, such stupendous suppers and such fine clothes. I watched one young lady at four balls in as many dresses and each dress of the most *stunning* description. Fancy Anny and Minny in yellow and silver . . . . the Lord forbid.

Further excitement was provided by "birthday balls" which, according to Mrs. Trollope,[10] who visited Amer-

[7] Thackeray described his series of feastings on "his American tour as one unbroken indigestion" (Eyre Crowe, *With Thackeray in America*, p. 21).

[8] *Letters of Thackeray:* pp. 165–67.

[9] James Grant Wilson, *op. cit.*, I, 148–50.

[10] *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, I, 209.

ica from December, 1827, to July, 1831, were given in every town and city in the Union on the twenty-second of February in honor of the "Father of our Country." The particular feature of this ball which impressed Mrs. Trollope was the "democratic" personnel of the gathering, at which she recognized "in almost every full-dressed beau the master-shopman," whom she had "been used to see behind the counter." Then, too, there were all kinds of clubs; those for the masses, for those of moderate means, in a room with bare floors and walls, a table, and a few chairs. Here the youth of the city gathered evening after evening "to drink the worst possible whiskey, to smoke segars, and play with dirty packs of cards." Then there were places where they could, for half a dollar, or even a quarter of a dollar, find entrance, and, for a small sum more, dance and drink all night.[11] While Mrs. Trollope dignified such places by calling them "clubs," in American parlance they would be termed "saloons."

Lowell gives a picture[12] of a wholesome bit of excitement occurring in a place and in connection with an event which rather takes us by surprise. The place is staid Old Cambridge; and the day one usually associated with dignity and serious decorum, Commencement Day. The year is 1824. On this day, Cambridge departed from "the cloistered quiet which characterizes all university towns" and bore all the marks of an "English fair."

[11] *Presbyterian Quarterly Review,* IV (1856), 682–85.

[12] *Literary Essays,* I, 79–81.

Stations were marked out beforehand by the town constables, and distinguished by numbered stakes. These were assigned to the different venders of small wares and exhibitors of varieties, whose canvas booths, beginning at the market-place, sometimes half encircled the Common with their jovial embrace. Now all the Jehoida-boxes in town were forced to give up their rattling deposits of specie, if not through the legitimate orifice, then to the brute force of the hammer. For hither were come all the wonders of the world, making the Arabian Nights seem possible, and these one beheld for half-price. . . . . Here the mummy unveiled her withered charms, a more marvellous Ninon, still attractive in her three-thousandth year. Here were the Siamese twins. Here were the flying horses on which, as we tilted at the ring, we felt our shoulders tingle with *accolade,* and heard the clink of golden spurs at our heels. Hither came the Canadian Giant, surreptitiously seen, without price, as he alighted, in broad day at the tavern. Hither came the great horse, Columbus, with shoes two inches thick. . . . . In the trough of the town pump might be seen the mermaid, its poor monkey's head carefully sustained above water, to keep it from drowning. There were dwarfs, also, who danced and sang, and many a proprietor regretted the transaudient properties of his canvas, which allowed the frugal public to share in the melody without entering the booth. For the bankrupt afternoon there were peep-shows at a cent each.

This reminiscence of Harvard's "scholastic festival" made Lowell, in 1854, heave a regretful sigh that such rollicking commencement days had been relegated to the past.

This same sort of restless excitement expressed itself in political life also. Intense was the excitement connected with the political campaign of 1840, commonly known as the "Log Cabin and Hard Cider Campaign," when General William Henry Harrison was triumphant-

ly elected to the presidency of the United States over Martin Van Buren, the then incumbent. Harrison was known as the "log-cabin candidate."[13] Log cabins, with their accompaniments of dried skins, eagles, barrels of hard cider, and gourds, were featured in processions that were often two miles in length. One log cabin was drawn by "eight beautiful horses, each wearing a set of bells."

> This cabin was occupied by a delegation of forty, who seemed to greatly enjoy their comfortable headquarters. A man was seated on a barrel of hard cider behind; on the sides were a number of skins of various animals; in one of the windows a hat without a crown was thrust; cooking utensils and farming implements, with tools peculiar to the labor of the log cabin occupants abounded about it, and upon the roof an oppossum was seen clinging to a branch of a gum tree.

One delegation to the Ratification Convention at Baltimore had a "magnificent and costly banner," containing forty yards of silk, on which were painted a river and a factory village. All the banners bore mottoes apropos of the time: "Religious Toleration and Public Liberty"; "Protect American Industry"; "Hard Cider Harrison and Reform"; "Buff and Blue, Good and True, for Tippecanoe"; "General Harrison Elected to the Presidency by the Hard-Handed Yeomanry"; "Not That She Loved Caesar Less but Rome More"; *"Tanto Nomine Nullum per Eulogium";* "She Will Cherish in Her Manhood the Defender of Her Infancy"; "She Will Teach Palace Slaves to Protect the Log Cabin." Such an immense con-

[13] See A. B. Norton, *The Tippecanoe Campaign of 1840*, pp. 95–152.

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course moving like an "army with banners" had never before been seen. The procession was two miles in length, the men marching in platoons, six to ten abreast. The Baltimore street was one long gallery of beauty.

> Innumerable white handkerchiefs waved by fair hands greeted each advancing pennon, and to the waving of handkerchiefs and to smiles and bright glances from the windows, the young Whigs returned loud cheers with uplifted hats. It may be safely calculated that for every three rounds given for the Whig cause generally one was especially devoted to the ladies of Baltimore.

Never again was there a campaign of such hurrah and enthusiasm as that of 1840.

Even a temperance convention adapted the spectacular to its own designs, as was demonstrated by such a convention held in Cincinnati in 1842.[14] The procession was composed of several thousand men and, as Dickens describes it,

> was marshalled by officers on horseback who cantered briskly up and down the line with scarves and ribbons of bright colours fluttering behind them gaily. There were bands of music too, and banners out of number. The banners were very well painted and flaunted down the street famously. There was the smiting of the rock, and the gushing of the waters; and there was a temperate man with "considerable of a hatchet," aiming a deadly blow at a serpent which was apparently about to spring upon him from the top of a barrel of spirits. But the chief feature of this part of the show was a huge allegorical device, borne among the ship-carpenters, on one side whereof the steamboat Alcohol was represented bursting her boiler and exploding with a great crash, while upon the other, the good ship Temperance sailed away with a fair wind, to the heart's content of the captain, crew, and passengers.

[14] Dickens, *American Notes,* pp. 192–94.

While this novel kind of temperance display and holiday-looking concourse impressed the English humorist as being of an exaggerated, exciting character, he commended the people for their conduct during the day, which "was admirable and *full of promise.*"

Another phase of this emotional excitement which is characteristic of the period is to be found in religious demonstration. In seeking a cause for this religious excitement, Captain Marryat[15] states his belief that the people of America "are prone to excitement, not only from their climate, but constitutionally, and it is the *caviare* of their existence." It probably may be found in the fact that the emotions of people must have an outlet in one form or another. Since many could not make use of the usual channel furnished by worldly amusements, frowned upon by a straight-laced Puritan conscience, one, equally dangerous, was provided by the revivals and camp meetings of the time.

Mrs. Trollope had been in Cincinnati only a short time when her curiosity was aroused by a much-talked-of revival.[16] She visited one of the principal Presbyterian Churches in that city twice while the revival, attended by the most exaggerated emotional excitement, was in progress. In Mrs. Trollope's words:

> The preacher described with ghastly minuteness the last feeble, fainting moments of human life, and then the gradual progress of decay after death, which he followed through every process up to the last loathsome stage of decomposition. Sudden-

[15] *Marryat's Diary in America (1839)*, 1st Ser., III; 127.

[16] *Op. cit.*, I, 102–11.

ly changing his tone, which had been that of sober, accurate description, into the shrill voice of horror, he bent forward his head, as if to gaze on some object beneath the pulpit . . . .; the preacher made known to us what he saw in the pit that seemed to open before him. No image that fire, flame, brimstone, molten lead, or red-hot pincers could supply, with flesh, nerves, and sinews quivering under them, was omitted. The perspiration ran in streams from the face of the preacher; his eyes rolled, his lips were covered with foam, and every feature had the deep expression of horror it would have borne, had he in truth been gazing at the scene he described. . . . . At length he gave a languishing look to his supporters on each side, as if to express his feeble state, and then sat down and wiped the drops of agony from his brow.

Two other priests arose, and began to sing a hymn. It was some seconds before the congregation could join as usual. When the singing ended, another took the centre place, and began in a sort of coaxing affectionate tone to ask the congregation if what the dear brother had spoken, had reached their hearts. "Come, then!" he continued, stretching out his arms toward them; "Come to us and tell us so. . . . . Come, then! Come to the anxious bench and we will show you Jesus! Come! Come! Come!"

Young girls arose and sat down and rose again; and then the pens opened, and several came tottering out, their hands clasped, their heads hanging on their bosoms and every limb trembling, and still the hymn went on; but as the poor creatures approached the rail, their sounds and groans became audible. They seated themselves on the *anxious benches;* the hymn ceased and two of the three priests walked down from the tribune, and, going one to the right, and the other to the left, began whispering to the poor tremblers seated there. These whispers were inaudible to us, but the sobs and groans increased to a frightful excess. Young creatures, with features pale and distorted, fell on their knees on the pavement and soon sunk forward on their faces; the most violent cries and shrieks followed, while from time to time a voice was

heard in convulsive accents, exclaiming: "Oh Lord!" "Oh Lord Jesus!" "Help me, Jesus!" and the like.

Such emotional religious excitement, as Mrs. Trollope concluded, sometimes had the effect of rendering the young women feeble and enervated for life.

The description in this revival-sermon is probably equalled in its terrible realism only by that familiar address of Jonathan Edwards—*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,* in which the noted eighteenth-century preacher pictured with appalling vividness "the great furnace of wrath," and the "wide and bottomless pit" over which the sinner hangs suspended by "a slender thread," threatened every moment to be singed and burned asunder by the wrath of an "infinite god," from which there is no possible escape. However, while the sermon heard by Mrs. Trollope closely resembles that of the eighteenth-century divine in its method of realistic horror, it differs markedly from it in the absence of the grim fatalism which accompanies the appalling doctrine in Edwards's sermon. The sinner of the nineteenth century is a free moral agent, an individual being with a power and will, if he so desires, to make a reconciliation with his God. In this difference is struck a characteristic note of the romanticism of the nineteenth century, in life, in religion, in literature—the freedom of the individual.

While aesthetic excitement was often furnished by dinners, balls, fairs, processions, and religious demonstrations, it was at other times supplied by the stage. Breathlessly, according to Minnegerode in the *Fabulous*

Forties,[17] the leading citizens of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, in the spring of 1840, were awaiting the arrival of Miss Fanny Elssler from Paris, whose *La Tarantule* established her claim to be the best dancer America had ever seen. Minnegerode writes:

> Her arms, her feet, her body, her eyes, her features, every part of her anatomy except her legs, of which in the Forties she was, of course, not officially possessed, were all in harmonious motion. . . . . The effects of the tarantula bite, the shuddering of the whole frame, broken by wild attempts at dancing, were a masterpiece of pantomimic acting. She "was called before the curtain amid showers of roses and thundering applause . . . . her rooms at the American hotel were banked high with roses." In one of her letters, she wrote, "The scene that ensued beggars description. The whole house rose, and such a shout ascended as stunned my senses and made me involuntarily recoil. Men waved their hats, and women their handkerchiefs. . . . . The most deafening exclamations of delight broke at rapid intervals from all parts of the house, until they lashed themselves into a perfect tempest of admiration. . . . . The curtain fell amid a roar that sounded like the fall of mighty waters, and that brought me before them. . . . . Their applause was perfectly frantic; cheers and bravos saluted me, and flowers and wreaths fell upon me."

Other features of the stage besides Miss Elssler's dancing met an enthusiastic response. *The New York Mirror and Ladies' Literary Gazette* of July 14, 1827,[18] calls attention to *Evadne*, in which Mr. Forrest, the popular American actor, played the part of the hero. The play is advertised in the *Mirror* as one in which "dramatic excitement is never suffered to languish . . . . full of glittering spectacles, blazing palaces, and bloody dag-

[17] Pp. 26–48. [18] IV, 198.

gers." *The Gladiator* by Dr. Robert Montgomery Bird was first performed at the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, October 24, 1831,[19] before an immense audience. In his *History of the Theatre in America,* Arthur Hornblow relates: "The tremendous scene at the close of the second act, when the gladiators break loose from their tyrants and raise the standard of revolt, aroused the audience to the highest pitch of enthusiasm."

However, the theater was far from being, among the higher classes, the popular or fashionable form of amusement. In most cities the support was not sufficient to warrant keeping the theaters open for any consecutive number of weeks. The reason usually given was the opposition of the clergy; yet this fact did not prevent the men from stampeding a theater when a popular foreign actor or dancer was the attraction. The absence of decorum at the theater, as well as the presence of a Puritan conscience, was the cause of the presence of few women at the playhouse. When they did attend, they occupied the boxes. Minnegerode states:[20]

"It was left to the lower classes to storm the door of the Bowery and the Olympic every Saturday night and get their fifty cents worth of melodrama and burlesque . . . . and yet it was a decade of dramatic brilliance, of peculiar great stars in every branch of acting," including Fanny Elssler, Fanny Kemble, Edwin Forrest, Charles Kean, Junius Brutus Booth, James Hackett, and Ellen Tree. The plays of Shakespeare and Sheridan were being enacted again and again.

[19] Arthur Hornblow, *History of the Theatre in America,* II, 61–62.

[20] Meade Minnegerode, *Fabulous Forties,* p. 150.

The intense rivalry between the English actor, Macready, and the popular American star, Edwin Forrest, originating in a misunderstanding between the two, created a frenzy of excitement upon the occasion of several of Macready's appearances in America. On April 2, 1849,[21] during Macready's performance of *Hamlet,* in Cincinnati, "a ruffian from the left-side gallery threw into the middle of the stage half of the raw carcase of a sheep." On May 7, of the same year, Macready, upon his appearance on a New York stage, was greeted by a shower of copper cents, four or five eggs, a great many apples, a peck of lemons, pieces of wood, a bottle of asafetida, and a chair—all of which constitutes a sort of belated edition of early-eighteenth-century stage manners in England. The rivalry between Forrest and Macready and the partisanship among the theater-goers, fanned by the press, developed into an open quarrel and scandal which finally culminated in a riot outside the Astor Place Opera House on May 10, 1849. On this tragic occasion, twenty-two persons were killed and thirty-six wounded.[22] Macready barely escaped with his life. Disguised

[21] Sir F. Pollock, *Diaries of William Charles Macready,* II, 420–23.

[22] (*a*) See Arthur Hornblow, *op. cit.,* pp. 36–42.

b) "The disturbance in New York at once lost for Forrest the support of the better classes of theater-goers . . . . while he became more than ever an idol of the *common people* who saw in him a champion of America's resistance to English assumption" (*ibid.,* p. 42).

c) "In the following month of September, the Astor Place rioters were tried at the Court of General Sessions, New York, before Judge Day and a jury, and, after a trial of fifteen days were all convicted. The sentences varied from one month's imprisonment to imprisonment for one year and payment of a fine of $250)" (note by Sir F. Pollock, *op. cit.,* II, 428).

and accompanied by a few friends, he was driven to New Rochelle. From there he took the train to Boston, whence he sailed for England.

While Macready was being insulted by various forms of organized violence, Ole Bull was delighting the American musical world. In 1844, Macready, upon arriving in Charleston, decided to postpone his appearance for a week, owing to the "puffery" given to the Scandinavian. George William Curtis[23] described Ole Bull as "a young Viking, charming and subduing. He fascinated young and old. He played like the Piper and the entranced country danced after."

Thackeray writes to his family: "I had a very pleasant little party-kin last night at Longfellow's, where there was a mad-cap fiddler, Ole Bull, who played most wonderfully on his instrument and charmed me still more by his oddities and character. Quite a character for a book."[24]

Macready, after his return to London, made the following entry in his diary, September 5, 1850: "Read the account of the arrival of Jennie Lind among that degraded population of New York. They *make an excitement,* if one does not come to them. Ole Bull, for instance, and they will out-Herod Herod in the cruelty of their kindness to poor Jennie Lind, who will be long before she knows what quiet is."[25]

This prevailing tendency to seek the exciting in times of recreation, in pleasure-seeking moods, bears a

[23] *The Easy Chair,* p. 149.

[24] James Grant Wilson, *op. cit.,* I, 91.

[25] Sir F. Pollock, *op. cit.,* II, 469–70.

distinct relationship to the literary appreciation of the time and, as we shall see in the succeeding chapter, was detrimental to Wordsworth's ready reception in America. One could hardly suspect that those craving sensational excitement would be interested in a philosophical and meditative poet. If they sought aesthetic relaxation in reading, they naturally found it in a type of literature in keeping with the life described.

III

Another trait which stands out conspicuously before the observer of American life during the first half of the nineteenth century is sentimentality. An exaggerated sentiment associated with the familiar and homely made a great appeal to the people of this period; and so it was served to them from the concert platform, from the dramatic stage, the lecture stand, the political arena, in story, song, and poem. They not only roared, stamped, and clapped vigorously when Elssler danced for them, greeting her with thunderous applause, but they also expressed their appreciation of the "Divine Fanny" in a more tender and touching manner.[26] Minnegerode states:

> Hats were named after her, songs written for her, and her statue exhibited in New York. In Richmond she was received

[26] "In obedience to a moral right and aesthetic duty, Emerson and Margaret Fuller went together to see the most accomplished ballet-dancer of the '40's. Neither of them had ever seen a ballet before; neither knew quite what to expect. The dance began; both sat serenely silent; at last Emerson spoke. 'Margaret,' he said, 'this is poetry.' 'No, Waldo,' replied Margaret, 'it is not poetry, it is religion'" (Barrett Wendell, *Literary History of America*, p. 301).

with cannon and tolling bells; in Boston, she danced the top stone onto the Bunker Hill monument; in Baltimore the young fashionables dragged her carriage through the streets; in Havana numbers of white pigeons, trained in such politeness, were let loose to bring her garlands of flowers. . . . . Much of the Elssler mania seems to have been due to her curtain speeches. From the time of that first night, when her "Thousand thanks" took New York by storm, she never forgot that America enjoyed tears and the hand on the heart.[27]

Women lost their hearts and senses to Ole Bull and were moved to a madness of joy and tears, as expressed by William Henry Thorne in *Modern Idols*.[28] Macready makes the following notation in his diary of January 6, 1844: "Looked at the papers, and was sickened with the sentimental puffery of Mr. N. P. Willis over the catgut of Ole Bull."[29]

A sentimental pathos, tenderness, and picturesqueness in many of Jennie Lind's songs were qualities which made her one of the most popular European visitors who ever came to America. George William Curtis, who heard all of the Lind concerts in New York but one, in his essay on the singer in the *Easy Chair*[30] speaks of the appeal made by her Northern songs. "She was," the essayist writes, "the spirit of the North singing its hymn

[27] *Op. cit.*, p. 49.

[28] P. 60.

[29] William Toynbee, *Diaries of William Charles Macready*, II, 247.

[30] (*a*) Pp. 147–55.

b) Her series of concerts extended from September, 1850 to May 24, 1852.

c) The proceeds from her first six concerts were £30,000 (*Diaries of Macready*, II, 47).

and the audience sat enchanted under its spell. . . . . She sang with evident feeling and with responsive tenderness the audience listened." The "fresh bouquet" which marked each appearance "gladdened some ardent heart." A letter, written by Miss E. S. Custard, December, 1850,[31] "drips with sentimentality." Miss Custard welcomes the "Sweet Songstress of Stockholm" to the hearts of her American sisters. "Sweet vestal of a heaven-born art! thy feet stand upon the mount of inspiration and as the silver-lined clouds float around thee, thy spirit listens to harmony celestial, and catches from their strains 'unwritten music,' and the munificence of heaven tunes thy lips to convey its expression to a listening world." The writer asks the "sweet singer of the North," if she will not "leave for awhile the palaces of pride and luxury and the halls of heartless, capricious fashion and, obeying the pure impulse of nature, repose thyself within the calm precincts of this western paradise." This western paradise cannot tender to Jennie "millions of gold—but we can welcome thee to our hearts, can provide couches on which thou canst rest, and pure food for thy refreshment." After elaborating upon the grandeur of the scenery in this "Western paradise" the singer is assured, that, if she will come,

> Our fathers and brothers shall protect you, our mothers shall be your nurses in sickness, our sisters shall lead you forth in the pure air, our children shall cull the sweetest flowers as the votive offering of innocence, and the aspirations of all shall bring you the blessings of heaven. . . . . Hie thee away from the whirl of

[31] *Ladies' Repository*, X, 402–3.

excitement and the unmeaning conventionalism of fashionable society, and repose thy wearied nature in the quiet homes of thy loving sisters of the West.

Notwithstanding the touching tenderness of this appeal, it failed to bring the sweet singer to the "Western paradise."

Thackeray stated in a letter written from New York to Macready, on November 20, 1852: "What the people like is sentiment. I could not give them any of this article, except about George III, whom they received very tenderly. I polished him off with an image taken from the death scene of an old king. . . . ."[32]

An article in the *North American Review*[33] describes the sentimental attitude of the American people toward Dickens when he visited this country: "Ladies of cerulean hose tormented Dickens with their literary platitudes, and romantic maids begged for locks of hair, and moon-struck cab-men and hackney-coach drivers plucked bare the sleeves of his shaggy coat for keepsakes."

During the political campaign of 1840, already mentioned, General Harrison was elected on the retrospective and symbolic sentiment connected with the log cabin.[34] In the columns of the leading papers, the opposing party had made the following disparaging comment: "Give him a barrel of cider and settle a pension of two thousand a year upon him, and take our word for it, he

[32] James Grant Wilson, *op. cit.*, I, 40.

[33] LVI, 225–37.

[34] A. B. Norton, *op. cit.*

will sit the remainder of his days in a log cabin."[35] Such a slur upon the old soldier who had served his country faithfully and long on the battlefield, who had endured the toils and perils of a pioneer life, and had always shared his substance with the poor and needy, filled the hearts of the hardy frontiersmen and of the leading men in the West and South who lived in log cabins, with indignation. The dwellers in log cabins in the valleys and on the mountain-tops, who lived in plainness and simplicity took the epithet of derision applied by his enemies as personal to themselves and gloried in the log-cabin candidate. They went through the country singing:

They say that he lived in a cabin
And lived on old hard cider too;
Well, what if he did, I'm certain
He's the hero of Tippecanoe,
He's the hero of Tippecanoe.

During this campaign Daniel Webster addressed ten thousand persons collected in a pine grove at Saratoga. This big crowd he held for three hours in fixed and profound attention, broken only by constantly repeated cheers.[36] An extract of his speech is as follows:

I agree that to live in a log cabin is no recommendation of a candidate for the Presidency, neither is it any disqualification. It is however, to be assumed that a man, who by his capacity and industry, has raised himself from a log cabin to eminent station in the country, is of more than ordinary merit. I, sir, have a feeling for log cabins and their inhabitants. I was not myself born in

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[36] *The Works of Daniel Webster* (Little, Brown & Co., 1881), II, 5–36.

one, but my elder brothers and sisters were—in the cabin in which, at the close of the Revolutionary War, in the perils and sufferings of which he bore his part, my father erected on the extreme frontier of New Hampshire, where beyond the smoke which curled from its chimney, not another stood between it and the walls of Quebec. In this humble cabin, amid the snow-drifts of New England, that father strove, by honest labor, to acquire the means of giving his children a better education and elevating them to a higher condition than his own. That cabin I honor for the sake of the venerable man who dwelt in it. [Here Mr. Webster's voice became inarticulate from emotion.] That cabin I annually visit, and thither I carry my children, that they may learn to honor and to emulate the stern and simple virtues that there found their abode; and when I or they forget that cabin and what it teaches and recalls, may my name and their names perish from among men forever.

And so the log-cabin candidate rode to victory on the biggest wave of sentimentality that ever marked a political campaign in this country.

This sentimental era reveled in illustrated annuals, "gems," "tokens," "keepsakes," "albums," "libraries for young ladies," and various kinds of gift books. America showed her slavish imitation of England in this respect as in many other customs, literary and otherwise. From the time that the first American annual, the *Atlantic Souvenir*[37] appeared in 1826, a constantly increasing

[37] The *Album* came out in 1824. A clipping in the copy of the *Album* in the library of the University of Michigan speaks of its being the first of the gift books issued in *America,* instead of the *Atlantic Souvenir* of 1826, which is generally considered the first. In answer to my letter of inquiry to Mr. F. W. Faxon, the acknowledged authority on literary annuals and gift books, Mr. Faxon stated (November 16, 1926): "The *Atlantic Souvenir* was the first annual that had a con-

number of annuals and gift books appeared "until, from 1846–52," according to F. W. Faxon, "an average of sixty appeared each year, sixty-six having been recorded in 1851."[38]

On the title page of the *Album* appears a significant expression of good will toward the little volume, as it goes out to meet the ladies:

> Go! lovely volume—grace fair Beauty's bowers—
> Improve her heart—amuse her listless hours.

The book is dedicated, by their "Devoted Friend and Admirers—the Publishers,"

> To the Ladies
> The Arbiters of Taste, and the
> Ornaments of Society.

The bindings of the annuals were unusually ornate and gaudy, heavily embossed or profusely gilded. There was usually an engraved or colored inscription plate or an added engraved title-page. Sometimes there were as many as thirty embellishments in one volume. Extremely sentimental titles were used: *Affection's Gift; Book of Gems; The Book of Pearls; The Bouquet; The Brilliant; The Casket; The Floral Gift; Christmas Roses; Christmas Blossoms; The Chrystal Fount; The Dew Drop; The Diadem; The Evergreen, Flora's Interpreter; The Golden Vase; The Iris; Ladies' Wreath; The Lily; Love's Garland; The Laurel; The Magnolia; The*

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secutive publication for a number of years. . . . . The *Album* is a book built on the plan of the *Annuals*. I still think the *Atlantic Souvenir* deserves credit as being the first one."

[38] *Literary Annuals and Gift Books.*

Moss Rose; The Mignonette; Poetic Wreath; The Primrose; Rose-Bud; The Rosemary; The Remember Me; The Snow Flake; etc.[39]

A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, of 1837, thus expresses the appreciation of the American people for this type of literature:

> We love the *Annuals*. There is something sacred in the destination of these beautiful compounds that endears them to our recollection. . . . . We do not look upon them merely as splendid picture books, or illustrated galleries of literature, but as a connecting link in the great chain of human love that ought to bind the biped race in pleasant unity. . . . . The dissemination of the *Annuals* softens the asperities of life, and assists the cultivation of the humanities . . . . thousands of persons connect pleasant remembrances with these books upon their parlor tables, and agreeable thoughts rush upon their minds whenever the handsome volumes glad their eyes.

While many of the annuals and gift books contained worthless sentimental stories and poems, the reading of which, according to Mrs. Sedgwick[40] "was indeed disastrous," immediately ruining a girl "both in body and soul," many of them contained specimens in prose and poetry of the leading writers of England and America, and thus played an important part in the dissemination of genuine literary culture. They served, too, as a training school for native writers, and "thus helped to create a distinctively American literature" and to make possible the popular literary magazines which later became a great power.

[39] *Ibid.*, I, 278.

[40] Fred Lewis Pattee, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

The stories in the popular magazines of the period are marked by much maudlin sentiment. The nature of the early issues of the *New York Mirror and Ladies' Literary Gazette* may be judged by the announcement at the head of the paper:[41] "Here Shall Young Genius Wing His Early Flight, Rich Dew Drops Shaking from Plumes of Light." In this issue we meet a hero who has "fair golden hair hung in light and glossy ringlets about his fine head and forehead." We read a sad story about "Genevieve D'Floris, A Mournful Tale but True," and a still more depressing detailed description of "The Burial of a Young Lady." We find one story in this volume, however, which, though tinctured with sentimentality, holds our attention because of certain Wordsworthian resemblances. The story is entitled, "Vicissitudes."[42] The heroine is called *Lucy of the Fold*. When the story opens, Lucy is a young girl of thirteen, remarkable for her sweetness of disposition and superiority of mind. She is shy as a woodland bird. Among the strangers who dropped in to see the beauty of *Rydalmere* was a boy who "belonged to the world of poetry and of the imagination." He had come into this "free mountain region from the confinement of college walls." The loveliness of the region and the "simple on-goings of that humble home, love, and imagination, beautified into poetry; all the silent intimations, which nature gave there of her *primal sympathies, in the hut as fine and forceful as in the hall,* showed in his excited spirit pre-eminently

[41] Vol. IV (August 3, 1826).

[42] *Ibid.* (October 7, 1826), pp. 82–83.

beautiful." The lover declares, "*I will take her to myself—I will myself breathe light over her being, till, in a new spring, it shall be adorned with living flowers that fade not away, perennial and self-renewed.*" The lover was obliged to go away for a few months. Upon his return, he "*crossed the mountains to Grassmere. . . . .* The midnight had been fixed for his return to the Fold. . . . . *the moon-glittering waters of Rydalmere* were as an image of life, pure, lovely, undisturbed, and, at the pensive hour, how profound." Entering the house, he saw through the open door of the room where Lucy slept, several people moving to and fro, as in great distress and anguish. "'Dead, dead, dead!' muttered in his ringing ears, a voice from the tomb."

In his illness which followed, he "imagined himself in *Grassmere Churchyard,* clasping a little mound on the green." The many resemblances in the story to the Lucy Poems and the fact that the writer speaks of the heroine as having died twenty years ago, which would bring the date near to that of Wordsworth's poems,[43] suggest the probability that the story is based on them. The unknown writer, however, has outrageously sentimentalized the material.

We pick up *Godey's Lady Book*[44] and read,

There was no music to my ear like the hollow moan of the tempest as it swelled like a dirge over the ruin it had made. Such was my state when I met with one as beautiful as the embodying of a poet's dream, and pure as the lily that grows in the shade and died untarnished by the rays of the sun.

[43] The Lucy Poems bear the dates 1799, 1800.

[44] Vol. I (1830).

The heroines of most of the stories have "pale brows," "sylph-like figures," and lily-white cheeks that easily become tinged with a gentle blush; on the slightest provocation, they become faint and fall to the floor. The villain has a "satyr-like mouth" and the hero an expressive countenance which is "a beautiful title-page to a virtuous and learned book."

In an editorial in *The Mirror* N. P. Willis declared, "Throughout all the middle and lower classes of American life, everything except toil and daily bread is looked at through the most sentimental and romantic medium."[45] This romantic sentimentalism Willis maintained is derived from books or from inundation by the works of fiction. Willis, himself, catered to the taste of the time. As Pattee points out, "His world is a sentimental world with fountains and moonlight and bulbuls, and lovers breathing their vows to the accompaniment of soft-music. . . . . The episode takes place after sunset . . . . there must be a sentence describing the moonlight."[46]

The style of the stories of the period is entirely deficient in simplicity; it is artificial, verbose, declamatory, sentimental. The lover asks his sweetheart if he is not "a worthy *repository* for her sweet thought." The purposes of the heroine's haughty father stood out before the hero, "cold and icy as boreal glaciers. . . . . In the darkness he went with his heart, unable to lift a corner from the curtain of his gloom."[47] The typical hero in a

[45] Fred Lewis Pattee, *op. cit.*, pp. 81–83. [46] *Ibid.*

[47] *New York Journal*, Vol. II (1854).

story in *Graham's Magazine*[48] is presented to us as follows:

When he flung off his straw hat and unbuttoned his collar, allowing the sunshine to dance among the raven curls heaped over his forehead, and the cool wind to bathe his throat, as every pliant limb swayed gracefully to the swing of his scythe, he was a perfect Apollo, deficient only in the lute. . . . . Where he would have reached in his umbrageous expansion, had the shoots of his soul been judiciously trimmed, trellised, sunned, shaded, and watered, who can tell?

For eighteen months Poe was editor of *Graham's Magazine,* which had begun in 1841. During his period, it exerted an influence more widely reaching than that of any other periodical before the Civil War.

In it appeared some of the best tales of Hawthorne and Poe and some of the distinctive poetry and essays of the New York and New England schools. Yet strong as it was on the more substantial side, it dared not exclude those lighter and more sentimental elements that pleased the greater part of its subscribers. . . . . In every way it was a compromise, leaning over to the popular side . . . .; the *Lady-Book* features so ruled the magazine that Poe left it in disgust. To Thomas in May, 1842, he wrote: "My reason for resigning was disgust with the namby-pamby character of the magazine. . . . . I allude to the contemptible pictures of fashion plates, music and love tales."[49]

This exaggerated sentimentality was an important factor in retarding the progress of appreciation of Wordsworth's work in America. Although some of Wordsworth's narrative poems are characterized by sentimental morality,[50] they are entirely free from the sickly

[48] XXIV (1844), 30–34.

[49] See: Pattee, *op. cit.*, pp. 75–76.

[50] See chaps. iv and v.

sentimentalism which is noted in much of the literature of this period. The poems of Wordsworth are dominated by the elements of simplicity, sincerity, delicate and refined beauty, sublimity, and meditative contemplation of man and nature, which would make no appeal to those reveling in the sentimental effusions observed in the examples given.

IV

Another element making up the temperament of the American people of this period is a profound moral and religious sentiment, which, in contrast to the emotional excitement as described in the revivals, manifests a Puritanic prudery and an appeal to religious feeling which was intended to protect the morals of the people and to induce in them a reverence for the Author of their being. For instance, a Victorian attitude was taken toward art. The nude in statuary was shocking. Even Governor Everett, of Boston, "a gentleman of refined mind and above sensitiveness," in compliance with general opinion, hung his fine cast of Apollo Belvidere with drapery.[51] There were certain niceties of speech which indicated the moral prudery of the period. To mention the word "leg" before a young lady was indicative of profound moral depravity. Even the table and pianoforte had "limbs." Captain Marryat[52] tells of visiting a young-ladies' seminary, in which the four "limbs" of the pianoforte were dressed in "modest little trousers with frills at the bot-

[51] Captain Marryat: *Diary in America,* 1st Ser., II (1839), pp. 244–46.

[52] *Ibid.*

tom of each." In this way the mistress of the establishment sought to impress the visiting mothers with her efforts "to preserve in their utmost purity the ideas of the young ladies in her charge." The moral narrowness of the period is further evidenced by the observations which led an English visitor[53] to remark that Washington was less puritanical than Philadelphia—in the former city a lady often took the arm of a man "who was neither her husband, her father, nor her brother," and in Washington there were no chains on the streets on Sunday, as was the case in Philadelphia, to prevent the people from driving on the holy day.

This moral and religious sentiment no less than the fondness for excitement and proneness to sentimentality had a striking effect upon the literary interests of the period. We have noted that the annuals were marked by sentimentality in both make-up and content. So also does the moral and religious note sound distinctly in both the annuals and the early readers. Mr. Faxon makes this statement:

> The literature of the *Gift Books* was remarkable for its freedom from the slightest taint of impropriety. There was never a contribution that savored of the lack of refinement. These volumes were intended as gifts and were such that they might ornament the drawing-room table of the most fastidious without offense either to mind or eye.[54]

Among the annuals are many of a decided religious tone: *The Christian Souvenir; The Moral and Religious*

[53] Mrs. Trollope; *op. cit.* II (1832), pp. 25–26.

[54] *Op. cit.*, chap. xxi.

Souvenir; The Christian Offering; The Christian Annual; The Parlor Book; The Evergreen; Missionary Memorial; The Christian Family Casket; The Religious Keepsake; etc. The *Gentleman's Magazine*[55] thus advertises *The Christian Keepsake* and *Missionary Memorial* for 1838:

> Such a work would contribute to throw a hallowing influence around American literature and furnish to the youth of this land additional proof that, so far from there being anything in religion repugnant to a pure and cultivated taste, there is no field into which the student in polite literature can go and find such choice, beautiful, and fragrant flowers, as those which bloom on Zion's Hill, or dip their pendant petals in the brimming edge
>
> "Of Siloa's brook that flows
> First by the oracle of God."

The selections in the readers of the period were chosen as much for their moral and religious appeal as for their intellectual features. In the Preface to the *American First Class Book,* by John Pierpoint, written from Boston, June, 1823, we find the following:

> The book itself will fulfill my hopes, if, while it helps them on towards their scholastic labors, the general improvement of their minds—it shall enable them better to understand and discharge their duties in life, and lead them to contemplate with pleasure and religious reverence, the character of the great author of their being, as discovered in His works, His providence, and His word; and thus help them to attain the end of their Christian faith—the salvation of their souls.

The Preface to the *National Reader* (1827) expresses the same idea: "I trust that there will be found

[55] I (1837), 283.

in it not a line nor a thought, that shall offend the most scrupulous delicacy or shall give any parent occasion to tremble for the morals of either a son or a daughter." The writer further trusts that the compilation will prepare the readers for "honour, glory, and immortality." Examples without number might be taken from many other readers.[56]

Mr. Curtis, in his essay on "Jennie Lind,"[57] attributes the wonderful hold which the singer had upon Americans to a religious appeal. Mr. Curtis declares:

> Certainly no public singer was ever more invested with a halo of domestic purity. When she stood with her hands quietly crossed before her and tranquilly sang, "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth," the lofty fervor of the tone, the rapt exaltation of the woman, with the splendor of the vocalization, made the hearing an event and left a memory as of a sublime religious function. This explains Jennie Lind's peculiar hold upon the mass of her audiences in this country, who were honest, sober, industrious, moral American men and women, to most of whom the opera was virtually unknown, if not a forbidden delight.

Yet these people, too, had an aesthetic side which was hungry for gratification.

Puritanism was an impelling factor in turning the American mind to Wordsworth. "A heart as religious, as moral, as democratic as the American heart is . . . ., animated by an incomparably moral idealism"[58] could

[56] See Hubbard's *American Reader* (1804), Preface and "Maxims and Sentiments"; Porter's *Rhetorical Reader* (1831); *Lady's Improved Library* (1804); McGuffey's *Readers*.

[57] *The Easy Chair*, pp. 147–48.

[58] Stuart Sherman, *The Genius of America*, pp. 21, 24.

not fail, with the spread of culture, with the " created taste," to respond to a poet in whose work moral idealism is ever present.

V

We have now to note two important traits which must be seriously considered in the discussion of the temperament of the American people in the first half of the nineteenth century. They are traits which are fundamentally inherent in all classes—both among the masses and the best literary types; they are at the root of American life and American literary tastes, as exemplified in both native and foreign interests, and ultimately make for all that is best in the life and the literature of the period. I refer to the fundamental characteristics of "simplicity" and "faith in the individual." There was, it is true, a wealthy and extravagant class—the upper two-thousand, Thackeray called them—who lived in mansions adorned with glittering mirrors and dazzling chandeliers, mahogany panels, cut glass, and brass ornaments. They sat down at a table weighted with silver plate and were attended by liveried servants. The "ladies" (there were no "women" in those days) wore velvet at four dollars a yard, bright-colored silks and satins, ermine-lined cloaks, costly furs, ostrich feathers, and diamonds. This "society" went to large parties and drank wine at ten dollars a bottle and ate twelve different pastries and four different kinds of cakes. It was all a tinsel imitation of royal entertainment in Europe.[59]

However, this dazzling picture has its counterpart,

[59] Meade Minnegerode, *op. cit.*, chap. ix.

the figures of which include the mass of the American people of this period. We find them living in small towns, villages, and rural districts; often in houses built of logs, with white-washed walls and rude furniture. These people were honest, frugal, and industrious. Their occupations and pleasures were simple in the extreme. The mothers and daughters spun and wove all the cotton and woolen garments of the family and manufactured the soap and candles they used. The fathers and sons cleared the forest, tilled the soil, and managed the store or clerked in one. As the day drew to a close, the nightly chores were performed; the mighty stacks of wood were piled "against the chimney-back." Gathering around the roaring fire, the family and visitors told stories, and enjoyed mugs of cider, rosy-cheeked apples, and "nuts from brown October's wood." Apple-parings, "raisings," "sugarings," corn-huskings, cider-making, and neighborhood singing made occasion for social gatherings.[60] There might be

> . . . . a rustic party, with its rough
> Accompaniment of blind-man's buff,
> And whirling plate, and forfeits paid.

In summer the diversions consisted of fishing in "the little trout brook" and in gathering the flowers in wood and meadow."[61]

"Simplicity" and worth of the "common man" associated with the sentiment of the log cabin, which played such an important part in the political campaign of 1840,

[60] See: Parke Godwin, *William Cullen Bryant*, chap. i.

[61] John Greenleaf Whittier, "Snow-Bound."

were the ideas which made such a sweeping appeal to the country:

> No ruffled shirt, no silken hose
> No airs does Tip display;
> But like "the pith of worth" he goes
> In home-spun "hodden-gray."
>
> Upon his board there ne'er appear'd
> The costly sparkling wine,
> But plain hard cider, such as cheer'd
> In days of auld lang syne.[62]

This idea of simplicity and that of self-reliance were fundamental characteristics which the people of the nineteenth century inherited from their Puritan forefathers. From the beginning of America's history each man had to look out for himself. Bliss Perry writes that he had to

> clear his own land, harvest his own crops, defend his own fireside. . . . . It was the sternest school of self-reliance, from babyhood to the grave, that human society is ever likely to witness . . . . its glories and its eccentricities are written in the pages of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman; they are written more permanently still in the instinctive faith in individual manhood.[63]

Mr. Perry refers to Holgrove in the *House of Seven Gables* for the purpose of illustrating the fact, that the

> moral integrity of the individual is the undertone of America. . . . . Holgrove had been by turns a schoolmaster, clerk in a store, editor, peddler, lecturer on Mesmerism, and daguerreotypist, but, amid all these vicissitudes, says *Hawthorne*, "he had never lost his identity. . . . . He had never violated the innermost man, but carried his conscience along with him."

[62] *The Tippecanoe Songs of 1840*, edited by A. B. Norton, p. 8.

[63] *Op. cit.*, pp. 80–81.

The New England Puritans had a great reverence for the individual. They would be in sympathy with *The Three Reverences* as set forth in *Wilhelm Meister:* "Reverence for what is above us, for what is around us and for what is under us. . . . . Out of those three Reverences springs the highest Reverence, Reverence for Oneself."[64]

Emerson more than any other American writer, emphasizes the doctrine of self-reliance, of individual freedom. Note the following quotations from his essay on *Self-Reliance:*[65]

Trust thyself; every heart vibrates to that iron string.

Whoso would be a man, must be a non-conformist.

Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.

No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature.

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what people think.
It is easy in solitude to live after our own;
but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

It is only as a man puts off all foreign support
and stands alone that I see him strong and to prevail.

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.
Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[65] *Works,* Vol. II.

While at sea, Emerson writes in his *Journal,* September 8, 1833:

> Back again to myself. . . . . A man contains all that is needful to his government within himself. . . . . All good or evil that can befall him must be from himself. . . . . The purpose of life seems to be to acquaint a man with himself.[66]

Truly Emerson stands out as the American prophet of individualism.

It is not to be wondered at that to a people in whom were inherent these durable qualities of simplicity, democracy, and faith in the individual, the poetry of Wordsworth, dealing as much of it does, with the Cumbrian dalesmen, who possessed these same qualities, should eventually appeal. It was necessary, however, first to win them from their love of the artificial and the conventional, the exciting and sensational in their amusements, and art and literature, and to create in them a taste for the sublimely simple. They had to be educated to see that poetry need not necessarily deal with the unusual and far-away; that subject matter for poetry may be close at hand; that it may deal with all that is genuinely true in nature and with the simple people about them.

B. INCREASE IN LITERARY CULTURE

Undoubtedly one of the most important factors to be taken into consideration in the study of a growing appreciation of Wordsworth in America is that which pertains to the increase in literary culture in this country.

[66] *Journals,* III, 198–201.

There have always been cultivated people in America, from the earliest beginnings of its settlement; people who owned good books and loved them, who had an appreciation of good literature. For many years this literary culture was a mark of the upper few; but, as time went on, and life in the new country became less strenuous physically, the circle of the literary élite widened until it embraced a large portion of the masses. Libraries were no longer owned only by private individuals; books were no longer within the grasp of only a cultivated minority. Libraries were formed in school districts. Public libraries were established in the cities and in all towns of any size. Such was the demand for books that the best publishing houses in the country were stimulated to issue books in such form and at such a price that the hunger for reading matter could be satisfied. While it is true this craving for something to read was often an unhealthful one, and therefore hostile to the discriminating taste necessary for the appreciation of such poetry as Wordsworth's, there were many books of a high standard circulated far and wide over the country. Such works of literature ultimately improved the taste and led to an interest in the best poetry.

This increase in literary culture in America is both an interesting and a pertinent question, bearing so directly upon the early fortunes of Wordsworth in this country that it is well worth a careful survey at this point.

It seems impossible to discuss many American traits without reverting to our Puritan forefathers. In taking

up the study of the increase in literary culture during the first half of the nineteenth century, we naturally ask the question: What did that period owe to the Puritans in that respect? It owed a great deal. The Puritans were not an illiterate, unimaginative people. We must remember, as George E. Woodberry points out, that

the Puritan line in England was constituted of Spenser, Milton, and Bunyan, the three most imaginative minds of their generations for a century of English life. The Puritans, being of the stock they were, could not but be imaginative, romantic, intense in vision, emotion and ideas. . . . . It is wide of the mark to describe a people to whom the Old Testament was more thoroughly known than Homer to the young Greek, and the New Testament more familiar than Victor Hugo to young France, an unliterary people. If it be the function of literature to lift the thoughts of men, to educate the emotions, to shape character toward ideal ends, to exalt and control and always to minister to the spirit in its walk on earth, the Bible discharged this office in the early generation of the New England settlements with an adequacy, a constancy, a penetration, a completeness of efficacy such as is hardly to be paralleled in history.[67]

And Mr. Woodward continues,

The Bible was the book in which the first Americans found what literature had to give to the hearts of the people, and in it they had their full and over-flowing literary, nor shall one hesitate to say, their artistic life. . . . .

William Hawthorne, the ancestor of the romancer,

brought over his Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. . . . . Spenser was also known, and Du Bartas, and as time went on, the Puritan literature came over—Milton and Bunyan and then Cowper, the characteristic books to be found in New England homes at the end of the Colonial period.

[67] *Op. cit.*, pp. 6–30.

Until 1638, the only books to be had in this country were those belonging to private collections.[68] In that year Harvard University was founded, and as an essential part of its equipment, appeared a library, the first one in America "designed to be used by a constituency larger than the family." From 1776 to 1826 there were many libraries established in the United States by various societies and organizations, more or less limited in scope. In 1820 two men's mercantile libraries were established in Boston and New York. Their greatest growth took place during the second quarter of the century. Besides furnishing books for readers, these associations also conducted classes in language and bookkeeping and furnished lecture courses. Similar institutions were later formed in other cities.

The following figures given by the United States Bureau of Education are enlightening:

1776, there were 29 libraries in the thirteen colonies, numbering 45,623 volumes;

1800, 49 public libraries, numbering about 80,000 volumes;

1775 to 1800, 20 libraries were formed;

1820 to 1825, 17 libraries were formed;

1825 to 1850, 551 libraries were formed;

1850 to 1875, 2240 libraries were formed.[69]

Some interesting informational items are also given to us by George Palmer Putnam in *American Facts,*[70] published in 1845. His investigation shows that in that year,

[68] See Joseph LeRoy Harrison, "The Public Library Movement in the U.S.," *New England Magazine,* N.S., X, 709–11.

[69] *Public Libraries in the U.S.* (Washington, 1876), Part I.

[70] Pp. 68–72.

The college libraries number about 60,000 volumes. Boston has its *Athenaeum* with 32,000; New York its *Society* with 4,000 . . . .; Philadelphia, a collection of 52,000;—Congress one of 27,000, and the cities of Charleston, Providence, Salem, Portsmouth, Hartford, Albany and others have their Athenaeums or public libraries, each numbering from 5,000 to 15,000 volumes. . . . . Besides these there is scarcely a town of any importance in the Union but has some sort of public reading-room, lyceum, or Athenaeum. There are at least some 800,000 or 900,000 volumes in public collections, mostly well chosen, placed within the reach of all classes.

In 1835, the legislature of New York enacted the first state law in the United States "favoring the idea of school district libraries."[71] "In 1838, $55,000 a year was set apart from the so-called deposit fund for books and apparatus, provided the districts would give as much more as their pro rata."[72] In 1837 a similar law to that of New York was passed in Massachusetts. In the same year Michigan adopted the plan of the school library. By 1855, eleven other states had adopted the law. Mr. Harrison[73] states that, in 1853, 1,604,210 volumes were reported in the school libraries.

To meet the demand for books, in 1830, Harper and Brothers[74] began the publication of libraries, or sets of books, the best known of which is "Harper's Family Library," which contained one hundred and eighty-seven volumes. "Harpers' Boys and Girls' Library" and the

[71] See: Herbert S. Adams, *Public Libraries in the U.S.* (Albany, 1900).

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 97. [73] See note 68.

[74] J. Henry Harper, *The House of Harper*, pp. 63–86.

"Classical Library" followed in 1831. In 1834 "Harpers' Library of Select Novels" was started, but abandoned in 1834 owing to the unpopularity of size and form. "But, in 1834, a new series was begun containing some of the best fiction of the day. The popularity of this library was very great, reaching six hundred and fifteen volumes." Other series of helpful books were put out by Harper and Brothers, and, in 1850, *Harper's Monthly Magazine* was started. "After six months' trial it had a circulation of more than 50,000 copies. In 1853, 130,000 copies of this magazine were printed per month."

During the first half of the nineteenth century there were, in America, in addition to the public libraries, a number of private libraries which are worthy of notice. George Ticknor, in 1813,[75] when twenty-two years of age, had a library of between three and four thousand well-chosen volumes of classical and general literature, which his father had given him. February 7, 1815,[76] young Ticknor, while traveling in the South, wrote to his father from Charlottesville, Virginia, that he had visited Mr. Jefferson and had seen his collection of books so much talked about. This collection consisted of seven thousand volumes and was contained in a suite of five rooms.

There was also during this period indications of genuine literary taste among individuals of simple means

[75] *Letters and Journals of George Ticknor* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co.), I, 11.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

and humble station. When Putnam[77] was traveling in the United States in 1845, he called on a man in a village in rural Vermont. Here he was much surprised to find costly editions of the classics, literature of the age of Elizabeth, the first editions of the time, of a clever collection in Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and German, and no less than two thousand volumes in Scandinavian literature alone, besides an extraordinary collection of rare and curious engravings. "And yet," writes Putnam, "the man had never been in Europe, never out of his own country, he was not a mere biblio-maniac—a miser of varieties, but he could read and translate his Spanish, his Portuguese, his Swedish, Danish and Icelandic; he could tell you the contents of his two thousand Gothic volumes."

Putnam also tells[78] of visiting a collector of rare books, all in "neat and elegant bindings. This *practical* collector read these books." He had, too, a picture gallery of fifty or more drawings of the most distinguished English artists.

This was the period of the establishment and expansion of high schools. In 1821 Boston established the first English high school, the "precursor of a movement of profound importance in uplifting the masses."[79] Special schools for the laboring classes were established in the manufacturing districts. "The small educational cen-

[77] George Palmer Putnam, *American Facts*, pp. 141–42.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 143.

[79] See Frederick Jackson Turner, "Rise of the New West" (1819–29), *The American Nation*, XIV (1905), 25–108.

tres, like Dartmouth, Bowdoin, Amherst, and Williams where the boys of New England worked their way through college, sent out each year leaders at the law, in the pulpit, in the press, and in the newer colleges." A large number of high schools, too, established in the Middle Region indicated that this part of the country, as well as the eastern part, was intellectually awake and responsive to high democratic ideals.

A striking instance of culture among the laboring classes is found in Lowell, Massachusetts in the forties.[80] In her book, *A New England Girlhood*,[81] Lucy Larcom tells of her experience as a worker in the factory, where the girls were surrounded by the most wholesome and elevating influences. "The factory boarding-houses were often managed by families of genuine culture." Some of the factory windows were made into a bowery of flowers and plants. Outside of factory hours the girls were formed into a Self-Improvement Club, out of which grew the *Lowell Offering*, a magazine published by the factory girls from 1840 to 1845. *The Lowell Offering*[82] found subscription all over the country and was indorsed by the *North American Review*. In England it excited more attention than any other American publication.

[80] See (*a*) *Old South Leaflets*, VII, No. 157, pp. 129–30; also (*b*) Lucy Larcom, *A New England Girlhood;* (*c*) Dickens's *American Notes* (Gadshill ed.), pp. 76–81; (*d*) Harriet H. Robinson, *Loom and Spindle*.

[81] Pp. 180–209.

[82] *Old South Leaflets*, VII, 151.

It is talked of in the political as well as the literary world. It has given rise to a new idea, that there may be mind among the spindlers. The book is a stubborn fact. President Felton of Harvard University, while in Paris, attended a course of lectures in English literature by Philarete Chastles and heard an entire lecture on the history and literary merits of *The Lowell Offering*. Thiers, the French historian, carried a volume into the Chamber of Deputies to show what working women in a republic could do. George Sand thought it a wonderful thing that the American mill girls could write and edit a magazine of their own. Dickens's reference to it in his American Notes, and other conspicuous notices gave it, for a time, a unique fame; and, although its life was short, —it was certainly a noteworthy phenomenon while it lasted.

Dickens, referring to the magazine, said, "Of the merits of the *Lowell Offering*, as a literary production, I will only observe, putting entirely out of sight the fact of the articles having been written by these girls after the arduous labours of the day, that it will compare advantageously with a great many English Annuals."

The lecture was an outstanding educational and cultural institution of the period. Popular lectures, historical, literary, and scientific, were fashionable in all the large cities. In 1820, Edward Everett returned from five years of travel and study in Europe. Emerson states:

By a series of lectures largely and fashionably attended for two winters in Boston he (Everett) made a beginning of popular literary and miscellaneous lecturing in that region, at least, that had important results. . . . . I am quite certain that this purely literary influence was of the first importance to the American mind.[83]

[83] "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England," *Works*, X, 307–47.

Putnam makes this statement: "In Boston, theatres, concerts, and balls stood no chance before them. Ladies preferred experimental philosophy even to Macready, and Egyptian antiquities to the mysteries of the polka; and the principal theatre was actually shut up and sold for a church."[84] In Boston, three or four lecture courses would be continuing at the same time. No evening in the week lacked for intellectual entertainment. The Lowell Institute, at which many distinguished men lectured, was supported by an endowment of $250,000 given by a wealthy citizen.

Thackeray, in a letter to his "Dear Lady," to which reference has already been made, written from New York December 23, 1852,[85] remarked, that the people are "well read and well bred"; they had read all of his books and they praised his lectures. His audiences in New York consisted of two thousand people. Often the room could not accommodate the crowd. In Philadelphia he met a girl who "poor soul, has read *Vanity Fair* twelve times."

In Boston the same crowded houses greeted Thackeray that had honored him in New York. He compared the litterati of Boston to those of Edinburgh. They included Longfellow, Lowell, Emerson, Holmes, Whittier, Parkman, Prescott, Ticknor, the Danas, father and son, and "many other chosen lights of literature." From Washington, the distinguished English lecturer wrote

[84] George Palmer Putnam, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–72.

[85] *A Collection of Letters of Thackeray* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), pp. 160–67.

home: "All the big-wigs come and are pleased." Writing from Richmond, Virginia, he stated that the two presidents of Washington attended his lecture the preceding evening.[86]

Lectures by Thackeray on the *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century,* and the *Four Georges,* and those by many eminent men of America, including Everett, Channing, Horace Greeley, Emerson, Whipple, Parke Godwin, Bayard Taylor, Holmes, Wendell Phillips, John Quincy Adams, Henry Ward Beecher, and Horace Mann, were important factors in stimulating the thought of the first half of the nineteenth century and in elevating the literary tone of the period.

We have thus seen the contrasting aspects of American life during the first half of the nineteenth century. We may regard the description given as a canvas painted on two opposite sides. Both sides are needed to make the painted canvas complete. The pictures are companion pieces. It may be one picture is more characteristic of one class of the people, while the other depicts the outstanding traits of another class; or, may be, the two sides of the canvas represent the same class in different moods. We have looked at both sides of the picture of these interesting people belonging to the first half of the nineteenth century. On the one side, we have seen the

[86] "By an invariable courteous previous arrangement, every four years the out-going President accompanies the incoming one for awhile, in order, as it were, that the latter may be amicably introduced and witness the public functions of Washington. Thus both President Fillmore and President Pierce honoured Thackeray by going together to hear his lecture" (Eyre Crowe, *op. cit.,* p. 116).

gay, the frivolous, the pleasure-loving, the sensation-craving; on the other, the serious-minded, those of marked moral and religious tendencies, those loving simplicity and having faith in the individual. These are conflicting tendencies, often pertaining to the same individual, some of the interests dominating the same person at one time, and others at another; while some traits always dominate certain classes. Surging through our picture, and coloring the literary tastes of the time, is the steady increase in literary culture, slowly but surely advancing the highest and best interests in literature and paving the way for an appreciation of such a poet as Wordsworth. However, one side of the picture stands out in bold relief against Wordsworth's interests in this country and, together with other causes, accounts for the early period of indifference and unpopularity toward the poet in America.

CHAPTER III

THE PERIOD OF UNPOPULARITY

I

In the previous chapter I have shown the forces in American civilization that were inimical to Wordsworth's poetry. In this chapter I shall show that America delighted in literature of a quite different sort from the work of Wordsworth. For these reasons he was not favorably received until 1824.

There is much evidence to show that readers were repelled by the theories set forth in Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. One of America's able critics of the nineteenth century, H. T. Tuckerman, in his Wordsworth essay which appeared in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1841,[1] declared:

> The lovers of poetry were at the outset repelled by a poet whose Prelude was an argument; who presented a theory in prose to win the judgment. It was like being detained at the door of a cathedral by a dull cicerone, who, before granting admittance, must needs deliver a long homily on the grandeur of the interior, and explain its deficiencies. "Let us enter," we explain impatiently; "if the building is truly grand, its simplicity needs no expositor; if it is otherwise, no reasoning will render it impressive."

This objection, in fact, persisted in American criticism through the entire period. Lowell, in his essay on

[1] VII, 105.

Wordsworth, written in 1854,[2] in speaking of Wordsworth's Preface, said: "It is a new thing for an author to undertake to show the goodness of his verses by the logic and learning of his prose." Lowell took the attitude that the

> . . . . imagination is a faculty that flouts at foreordination, and Wordsworth seemed to do all he could to cheat his readers of her company by laying out paths with a peremptory *Do Not Step Off the Gravel!* at the opening of each and preparing pitfalls for every conceivable emotion, with guide-boards to tell each when and where it must be caught.[3]

Although Lowell's criticism is not in all respects flawless, he was right when he declared that "these prefaces had undoubtedly had a great effect in retarding Wordsworth's fame."[4]

The reasons why this Preface was a "stumbling block" to the early critics appear in the following extracts. A writer in the *North American Review* for 1824[5] gave as a specific cause of Wordsworth's early unpopularity "the defects into which he has betrayed himself"; in other words, "his system or theory with regard to the offices and language of poetry." The writer agreed that the system is "true and beautiful," but thought Wordsworth had abused it. This critic continued,

> He is right in believing that the feelings, imaginations, reasonings, occupations, and habits of those in humble life are proper subjects for poetry; but he is wrong in compelling poetry to re-

[2] "Sketch of Wordsworth's Life," Introduction to *British Poets*, "Wordsworth" (1859), I, 23–24.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 35. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 34. [5] XVIII, 356–57.

peat their commonplace ideas, and seriously investigate their ordinary household arrangements and domestic implements; and particularly wrong in making her blow a trumpet before every shepherd's door, and to swell out into vast importance those circumstances which, if discussed at all, should have been treated with a brevity and indifference suited to their station.

The *North American Review* continued as a consistent objector to Wordsworth's theory. An issue of the magazine in 1829[6] spoke of the theory as a "mistaken system which is nothing but his own taste exalted into a law and has limited his influence in the world." The critic accused the poet of "exclusiveness" in his subjects of interest and also thought he was mistaken in regard to his theory of poetical language. Wordsworth emphasized the language of "low life purified from its defects, but it seems to us his main defect is its rusticity, and when purified from its coarseness, as it is in his writings, it is no longer properly called low." A writer in a later edition of the *Review*[7] thought his muse was shipwrecked on his theory. The reviewer's opinion was that the poet is wrong in confining his subjects to rustic life and not including "persons of superior mental culture." According to this critic, "if he had not entangled himself in an unlucky theory," he might have shared the popularity of Cowper. "If he had succeeded in his theory, he might have had the tavern popularity of Cowper, Burns and Scott." Of "tavern popularity" Wordsworth would surely have been contemptuous.

[6] XXVIII, 16–17.

[7] XXXV (1832), 175 ff.

According to an article in the *New Englander*,[8] the poetical world had been startled at the idea that "the highest efforts of the imagination need not necessarily imply a connection with those higher objects which have always appeared to be associated with it." The cultivated people of the time, those who had culled the choicest bits of wit and learning, demanded something original; and originality with them consisted in something absolutely new—something removed from the "beaten paths of humanity." These so-called "cultivated" people of the time believed only that man to be fit for poetic treatment who was above the common pursuits of life. And here came forth a poet with a very peculiar "fault." He

> sympathized with man—not with the artificial man of wealth and fashion—but the real man wherever he was to be found, especially where he was true to his whole nature, to the tenderness of domestic affliction, to the dignity of industry, and to the ties of neighborly sympathy, and to the surpassing worth of an honest and a religious life. He had found his ideal more perfectly realized, at least more commonly diffused, among the dalesmen of the Lakes, than in any other community of men, and he dared claim for their humble joys and the incidents of their lowly life, the dignity of human interest and the elevation of being worthy to be used as poetic themes.

This theory was so clearly at odds with received opinion that it caused Wordsworth to be singled out to bear the burden of contempt.

It has been interesting to note the opinions of these early critics toward this subject, which from the time it was first set forth in 1800, down to the present day, has

[8] IX, 599–600.

taken up much time and attention on the part of the commentators on Wordsworth. The idea of adopting for poetical objects "lowly man" and the "real language of men"[9] was something new and proved a stumbling-block to critics and readers alike. Many of the early critics made the mistake of attributing Wordsworth's merits to his system; they also often misrepresented it by failing to get the real meaning, which is, in substance, merely an objection to a peculiar phraseology which had been marked to distinguish poetry from prose, the strained imagery, the over-wrought conceit, the *strange diction* which many had thought to be necessary in poetry. To Wordsworth, real poetry was something far more vital than such effects as could be achieved through straining the language into startling forms. Paradoxical as it may sound, Wordsworth's poetical genius is fundamentally independent of any system.

II

While Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, setting forth his theory of poetic diction, undoubtedly frightened many readers and created a prejudice against the poet and his productions, the fundamental cause of his slow growth in America as in England is to be found in the nature of his poetry. This aspect of Wordsworth was brought out by Henry Reed in his essay on the poet in the *New York Review* in 1839.[10] Reed gives a long extract from the *Recluse* which he considers "the fullest exposition of the general argument of Wordsworth's po-

[9] Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. [10] IV, 28–30.

etry." The whole passage contains, as Reed says, an argument "at once so exalted and delicate" that "there need be no surprise" that "favor should be slowly won."

> . . . . Beauty . . . . a living presence of the earth,
> Surpassing the most fair ideal forms
> Which craft of delicate Spirits hath composed
> From earth's materials . . . . waits upon my steps;
> Pitches her tents before me as I move,
> An hourly neighbor. Paradise, and Groves
> Elysian, Fortunate Fields . . . . like those of old
> Sought in the Atlantic Main. . . . . Why should they be
> A history only of departed things,
> Or a mere fiction of what never was?
> For the discerning intellect of Man,
> When wedded to this goodly universe
> In love and holy passion, shall find these
> A simple produce of the common day.

With these lines as introduction, Wordsworth proceeds with the enunciation of his purpose,

> . . . . to travel near the tribes
> And fellowships of men,

and of them to make "authentic comment." The passage closes with an invocation to the "prophetic Spirit," to bestow upon him,

> A gift of genuine insight; that my Song
> With star-like virtue in its pace may shine,
> Shedding benignant influence and secure
> Itself from all malevolent effect
> Of those mutations that extend their sway
> Through the nether sphere.

The taste of the time had been so "blunted by an artificial school of poetry" that a "quick sympathy for

Wordsworth's poetry," Reed points out, was out of the question. Appreciation could not come until the "taste had been created" and the reader's spirit had become "not only sympathetic but co-active."

In addition to the delicate refined beauty of Wordsworth's poetry, there is present in much of it a mystical strain which the readers of the period would fail to appreciate. Professor S. F. Gingerich says, this mystical strain results "when the inner world, exalted under the influence of memory, is drawn into unity with the outer world."[11] In "Nutting," when the boy Wordsworth had

> . . . . dragged to earth both branch and brow

and thus "deformed and mutilated" the woods, he "felt a sense of pain" on beholding the "silent trees" and "the intruding sky." He exhorted his sister

> . . . . with gentle hand
> Touch for there is a spirit in the woods.

Throughout "Three years she grew in Sun and Shower" the spirit of Nature exerts a formative power upon Lucy. This spiritual power in Nature and in woman penetrates such poems as "It Is a Beauteous Evening Calm and Free," the "Highland Girl," and "She Was a Phantom of Delight." A mysticism characterizes the cuckoo. Its song creates for the poet—

> An unsubstantial faery Place,
> That is fit home for Thee.

This element of Wordsworth's poetry reaches its height in the passage in "Tintern Abbey," beginning:

[11] *Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning*, p. 77.

. . . . and I have felt
A Presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thought . . . .[12]

and the passage in the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," beginning:

Oh joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live. . . . .[13]

Several reasons might account for the fact that this subtle mysticism was neither understood nor appreciated by the early American readers of Wordsworth's poetry. One might be found in the life of the pioneer people. They were busy with felling trees to make pathways through forests. They were intent on subduing a wilderness to cultivation; were absorbed in the practical affairs of life in which mysticism had little place. Those who read poetry had become, as we shall see a little later in this chapter, used to the artificial type as exemplified by Pope, or the exciting writings of Byron and Scott, or the sentimental effusiveness of Mrs. Hemans and Mrs. Sigourney, in all of which subtle mysticism was absent.

Nor was the sublime majesty—the Miltonic ring which characterizes much of Wordsworth's poetry—recognized, since it lacks an Olympian Mount for a setting, with gods and goddesses ascending and descending. Milton was everywhere accepted in America as the most sublime and elevated of all poets; yet nothing in Milton is more sublime than Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty," the first line of which, "Stern Daughter of the Voice of

[12] Ll. 95–113. [13] Vs. 9.

God," is one of the mightiest metaphors in the English language. Another Wordsworth poem marked by a Miltonic majesty is "Influences of Natural Objects":[14]

> Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe
> Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of Thought. . . . .

It is an interesting comment on the unreliability of public taste that prejudice bred on other scores could dull the ear to such perfection as this.

III

Literary tastes, which, as I pointed out in chapter ii, were largely patterned after those of the eighteenth century, were not in harmony with poetry of a nature just noted. These literary tastes took several trends. One was toward the artificiality and conventionality of the school of Pope. Pope was the model for many young, ambitious American poets. They were indulging in Popean literary conceits and wretched Popean epigrams. A good illustration of the extreme to which the imitation of Pope was carried in America during the first quarter of the nineteenth century may be found in a small volume entitled *Boston Prize Poems*[15] published in 1824. The volume is largely made up of poems submitted in answer to an announcement made by the manager of the Boston Theatre in September, 1823, that "a prize of the value of fifty dollars" would be awarded "for the best Ode, or other Poetical Address—suitable to be recited at

[14] This poem is part of the *Prelude*, Book I, ll. 401–24, but had been published as a separate poem in 1799.

[15] Boston: published by Joseph T. Buckingham.

the exhibition of a pageant in honor of Shakespeare." Such expressions found in the "Prize Ode," as "god of the glorious Lyre," "Jove's exulting quire," "Olympian Lord of Morn," might have been transplanted from the "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day." While Cecilia, in Pope's ode, has the power "to lift the soul to heaven," in these prize poems Shakespeare is given the power to charm the "phantom throng."

The following verses from "Poem IX" in the little edition, *Boston Prize Poems,* is an example of the slavish imitation of Pope's heroic couplet:

> Immortal Shakespeare! 'tis to thee we raise
> This humble trophy to thy peerless praise.
> To thee the Drama owes its powerful sway,
> Raised by thy genius from its infant day.
> Proud Avon's banks shall echo long thy fame,
> And lasting as its waters be thy name.
> Immortal Bard! the Muses' theme shall be,
> To dedicate this night their lays to thee.
> Apollo here shall each fond soul inspire
> With thrilling accents from his trembling lyre,
> And bold Euterpe melt the feeling hearts,
> When she thy praises in her song imparts.
> The world shall glory in a name like thine,
> And offer incense at thy holy shrine.
>
> The western world had now emerged from night,
> By coruscations of the orient light;
> The sun of science here had lent its ray,
> And o'er Columbia dawned a brilliant day.
> In this blest spot where Freedom's temples tower,
> Long may the Drama find protecting power.
> May mild Instruction fill each scenick page,
> And Virtue prove the guardian of the stage.

Let reason here with taste and beauty join,
And Wit and Genius round the Drama twine.
May modest Merit, too, with Justice meet,
And drive Intrusion from his usurped seat;
While Truth's bold mirror, held to constant view,
To every passion gives the colour true.
Then Vice, confused, shall quickly shun the place,
When she beholds the features of her face
While Virtue, then, shall hold her goodly sway,
And man her precepts and her laws obey,
The Stage shall flourish through the world's vast clime,
And stand, unmoved, the powerful test of Time.

"Poem XIV," of which I shall give two stanzas, takes Pope's ode for its model:

'Twas at a time Apollo stood in tears!
The age of gold had gone—
The Muses wandered to their home,
No longer from their halls to roam.
And e'en the eternal youth seemed pale with years!
The nations at his feet
In leaden silence meet,
And mourn and wonder round his tuneless throne!
But lo! a form appears,
Borne on the coming years—
Wrapt like a vision in his robe of air,
A thousand hues are there!
Yet, 'tis a form of earth;
He treads like one of meaner birth;
And still that splendid brow,
Springs into divinity,
The towering mount of poetry!
And now,
He comes! he comes! it is our child, Shakespeare!
The sister choir
On wings of fire,

Oppressed with genius, smite the lyre,
Till every wire
Grows wild with song!
He's here—he's here—
Shakespeare!

And long
They would have paeaned round Apollo's throne;
But when the bard
Essayed to put their madness down,
Silent they stood, and gazed and heard,
While all the mortals lost,

Stared at his wildering power!
Within his hand
Fashioned of subtle thought, a wand
He bore;
He waved it round his revelling hair,
That streamed like banners to the air,
And cried "Appear!"

The majority of the poems in the volume are modeled in the manner and matter of Pope—far removed from the style of Wordsworth.

To many, Pope was the "supreme arbiter of the literary world."[16] His devotees were "charmed with the ever blooming landscapes of "Windsor Forest," and their souls "melt away at the soft complaint of the laughing Eloisa"; the Rape of the Lock "commanded the various passions—provoked laughter, breathed a tranquillity, or inspired a transport"; while the American lovers of Pope were "raised and borne away by the resistless force of his translation of the *Iliad*."

[16] James L. Onderdonk, *History of American Verse*, pp. 42–43.

In "Conversations with Charles Lanman," which appear in "Autobiographical Sketches of Daniel Webster,"[17] the American statesman and orator says, "I remember that my father one day brought home a pamphlet copy of Pope's *Essay on Man*. I need not say I read with avidity. I read, re-read, and then commenced again; nor did I give up the book till I could recite every word of it from beginning to end." In speaking of the tendency to steal from Pope, Webster declares: "a nugget—of his brain, hammered and flattened by present writers, fills a whole volume. He furnishes the capital for a hundred traders in poetry of our day."

Bryant's first poetry was written much in the strain of the eighteenth century. Wordsworth's influence came later; and while it changed the spirit of the poetry of the American writer, it never contained that large spiritual conception of nature which characterizes the poetry of Wordsworth. In spite of the later resemblance to Wordsworth, Bryant's early poetry was written clearly in the temper and manner of the eighteenth century.

IV

Another eighteenth-century trend of American literary taste of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and, indeed, one which extends throughout this period in a greater or lesser degree and which is always antagonistic to the interests of Wordsworth, is the craving for the exciting and sensational, which is a reflection of

[17] *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co.), XIII, 578.

that phase of the American aesthetic temperament noted in chapter two. Such writings as Mrs. Radcliffe's supernatural Gothic romances were very popular. In the *New York Mirror and Ladies' Literary Gazette* of August 5 and 12, 1826,[18] is an extensive review of *Gaston de Blondeville* (a posthumous romance[19]). The reviewer points to Mrs. Radcliffe as "the finest writer of this kind of fiction that had ever existed." The reader is given an anticipatory thrill by being told that the story is one of "supernatural terror"; that a specter is introduced as a principal agent in the awful plot of Gaston.

In the same number of the *Mirror* a review of Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* is given. Fred Lewis Pattee thus describes the excesses of the Gothic School:

> Horrible description predominates. The authors go out of the walk of nature to find some dreadful incident. Appalling noise must be created. Ghosts must be manufactured by the dozens. A door is good for nothing . . . . unless it creak. The value of a room is much enhanced by a few dismal groans. A chest full of human bones is twice as valuable as a casket of diamonds. Every grave must have its quiet disturbed by the devil, in some shape or other. Not a bit of tapestry but must conceal a corpse; not an oak can grow without sheltering bandits.[20]

It was in such sensational literature that the popular mind of the first half of the nineteenth century was interested—those stories that were built around the supernatural, miracles, and such "terror-compelling motifs

[18] IV, 10–11, 19.

[19] Mrs. Radcliffe died in 1823.

[20] Introduction to *Wieland* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1926).

as spontaneous combustion, ventriloquism and religious mania leading to murder."

The love of the exciting and marvelous was one of the main reasons for the great popularity of Scott and Byron in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and, to a less extent, beyond. Scott's popularity is attested by the fact that it is almost impossible to take up a popular magazine which appeared from 1810 until the late thirties without finding a sketch of the life of Scott, an announcement of the dramatization of *Guy Mannering, Marmion, Kenilworth,* and *Lady of the Lake,* a description of *Abbotsford,* or full synopses of and comments on the various Scott novels. In 1830 *Rokeby* furnished the plot for an opera. Ralph Leslie Rusk states: *"The Lady of the Lake* was so much in demand at Lexington within a few months after its publication in Edinburgh that the owner of a copy had to advertise for its return. . . . . James Flint, who visited the Ohio towns in 1818–1820 found Scott's novels still the literary sensation of the day."[21] Earl L. Bradsher says that, "by 1818, *Waverley, Guy Mannering,* etc., have excited as much enthusiasm in America as in Europe. Boats are now actually on the lookout for *Rob Roy,* all here are so impatient to get the first sight of it."[22]

The Harpers were among the first to bring out the Waverley novels in this country.[23] They would send a messenger "to board the in-coming packet before she

[21] *Literature of the Middle Western Frontier,* II, 12–13.

[22] *Mathew Carey,* p. 81.

[23] Henry Harper, *The House of Harper,* p. 23.

was made fast to the wharf, to secure as soon as possible, the early sheets. Every compositor was then put on the work, and every press stood ready for the printing. In this way, *Peveril of the Peak* was published in the incredibly short space of twenty-one hours."[24] The readers "generally admired" such of Scott's stories as the *Tapestried Chamber,* which appeared in the *New York Mirror,* February 7, 1829,[25] and *My Aunt Margaret's Mirror* in the issues of February 14 and February 21 of the same year.[26] The *Tapestried Chamber* turns upon the marvelous. Scott suggests that, in order fully to appreciate the tale as a ghost story, it should be read "by the doubtful light of the closing evening or . . . . by a decaying taper, and amidst the solitude of a half-lighted apartment." It is a story of supernatural terror and haunted apartments. The plot of *Aunt Margaret's Mirror* centers around a mysterious mirror in which tragic events are revealed.

Byron's fame spread with the same rapidity as Scott's. Rusk[27] makes the statement that *Hebrew Melodies,* published in 1813, were to be had in Kentucky within a few months after their first appearance in England. Both *Manfred* and the *Lament of Tasso* were for sale in Western bookstores a short time after their first publication. Carey and Lea, Philadelphia publishers,

[24] "Could Sir Walter Scott have obtained a copyright in the U.S., it would have been worth to him by this time £100,000" [*Maryat's Diary in America* (1839), 2d Ser., I, 230].

[25] VI, 241–43.

[26] *Ibid.,* 249–51, 257–60.

[27] *Op. cit.,* I, 13–15.

received in 1825 advanced copies of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth cantos of *Don Juan*. They were immediately given out to about thirty compositors, and in thirty-six hours an American edition was on sale.[28] Fearon tells us[29] that *Manfred* was received, printed, and published all in one day. In the *Western Review,* published in Lexington from 1819 to 1821,[30] Byron's *Mazeppa,* the first part of *Don Juan,* and the *Vision of Dante* were published.

Captain Marryat, during his tour of America, in 1839,[31] found in two log houses in Sault Ste Marie, a village of not more than fifty houses, complete editions of Byron's works. He was convinced that in nine drawing-rooms out of ten[32] a copy of Byron could be found lying on the table. Marryat was told by the largest publishers of New York and Philadelphia that probably 150,000 to 200,000 copies of Byron had been sold.[33] The Byron mania was carried to such an extreme that one town in New York state, consisting of a whiskey store and a warehouse, was called Port Byron.[34]

Byron was regarded as the greatest poet of the day and was characterized by American enthusiasts as "Lord of the Ascendent." Besides extensive reviews of Byron's

[28] Earl Bradsher, *op. cit.,* p. 87.

[29] *Sketches in America,* p. 35.

[30] See W. H. Venable, *Beginnings of Literary Culture in the Ohio Valley.*

[31] *Diary in America,* 1st Ser., I, 191.

[32] *Ibid.,* 2d Ser., I, 206. [33] *Ibid.,* p. 208.

[34] See Mrs. Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans,* II, 250.

work and extracts from his poems, a great variety of Byron articles appear in many early magazines: "Original Stanzas by Lord Byron"; "An Unwritten Drama by Lord Byron"; "A Remarkable Adventure of Lord Byron"; "The Homes and Graves of Byron and Mary Chaworth"; "An Incident Related by Lord Byron"; "A Prayer by Lord Byron," written under the melancholy impression that he should soon die. Byron imitators sprang up everywhere. One writer in the *North American Review* of January, 1832,[35] expressed the Byron vogue in America thus: "Every little city, town and village had its little Byron, its self-tormenting scoffer at morality, its gloomy misanthrope in song."

Ridicule of Wordsworth from America's popular idol helped to retard Wordsworth's favorable reception in this country. Of such ridicule we find many examples. In 1808, in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,*[36] Byron speaks of:

> The simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay,
> As soft as evening in his favourite May.
> Who warns his friends to shake off toil and trouble,
> And quit his books for fear of growing double;
> Who both by precept and example shows
> That prose is verse and verse is only prose.
> Convincing all, by demonstration plain,
> Poetic souls delight in prose insane;
> And Christmas stories tortured into rhyme,
> Contain the essence of the true sublime.
> Thus, when he tells the tale of Betty Foy,
> The idiot mother of an "idiot boy,"

[35] IV, 76. [36] Stanza 13.

A moon-struck, silly lad, who lost his way,
And like his bard, confounded night with day.
So close on each pathetic part he dwells,
And each adventure so sublimely tells,
That all who view the "idiot in his glory,"
Conceive the bard the hero of the story.

In the same satirical poem,[37] Byron refers to Wordsworth as "The meanest object of the lowly group," whose verse was void of all but "childish prattle." Again he remarks: "Let simple Wordsworth chime his childish verse."[38]

In *Don Juan,* finished in 1820, one finds satirical attacks upon various Wordsworth poems:

We learn from Horace, "Homer sometimes sleeps";
We feel without him, Wordsworth sometimes wakes,
To show with what complacency he creeps,
With his dear "*Wagoners*" around his lakes.
He wishes for "a boat" to sail the deeps—
Of ocean,—no, of air,—and then he makes
Another outcry for "a little boat,"
And drivels seas to set it well afloat.

If he must fain sweep o'er the ethereal plain,
And Pegasus runs restive in his "Wagon,"
Could he not beg the loan of Charles's Wain?
Or pray Medea for a single dragon?
Or if too classic for his vulgar brain,
He fear'd his neck to venture such a nag on,
And he must needs mount nearer to the moon,
Could not the blockhead ask for a balloon?

[37] Stanza 45.

[38] Stanza 46.

"Pedlars," and "Boats," and "Wagons!" Oh! ye shades
Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?
That trash of such sort not alone evades
Contempt, but from bathos' vast abyss
Floats scumlike uppermost, and these Jack Cades
Of sense and song above your graves may hiss—
The "little boatman" and his "Peter Bell"
Can sneer at him who drew "Achitophel."[39]

In view of Byron's extreme popularity, remarks like those quoted above, would have a strong effect upon American opinion.

V

I have called attention to a sickly sentimentalism prevalent in the popular magazines and annuals of the period, and I have quoted examples of this taste from anonymous writers. Two known authors of the time, somewhat higher in the literary scale than their unknown fellow-writers, yet far removed from the pale of Wordsworth, were Mrs. Sigourney and Mrs. Hemans. Their names appear oftener in the annuals and early readers than those of any other poet, American or English. Their work contained a saccharine, forced feeling, which appealed to the popular taste of the time. Such a feeling Wordsworth abhorred. His sentimentalism was due to his acceptance of an eighteenth-century theory of conduct called "sentimental morality."[40] It regarded

[39] Canto III, stanzas 98, 99, 100.

[40] Professor Oscar James Campbell, "Sentimental Morality," *Wordsworth's Narrative Poetry,* "University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature" (Madison, 1920), No. 2, p. 21.

pity, particularly if it produced tears, as a moral force.[41] The illustration of the theory in Wordsworth's tales, as we shall see in the next chapter, undoubtedly appealed to the sentimental tastes of America and was an aid to his popularity.

According to James L. Onderdonk,[42] Mrs. Sigourney contributed "more than two thousand pieces to nearly three hundred periodicals. The one great characteristic of Mrs. Sigourney's verse," continues Mr. Onderdonk, "is its uniform propriety. It is pure, chaste, and insipid, highly moral but lowly poetical." The American Hemans, as she was called, "was in constant demand for *lines,* or a *sentiment,* or *stanza* as to grace every sort of gathering." The following poem is representative of Mrs. Sigourney's work:

WIDOW AT HER DAUGHTER'S BRIDAL

Deal gently thou whose hand hath won
The young bird from its nest away.
Where careless 'neath a vernal sun,
She sweetly carol'd day by day.
The haunt is lone, the heart must grieve,
From whence her timid wing doth soar;
They pensive list at hush of eve,
Yet hear her gushing song no more.

Deal gently with her, thou art dear,
Beyond what vestal lips have told,
And, like a lamb from fountains clear,
She turns confiding to thy fold;

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Op. cit.,* pp. 155–56.

She, round thy sweet domestic bower,
The wreath of changeless love shall twine,
Watch for thy step at vestal hour,
And blend her holiest prayer with thine.

Deal gently thou, when, far away,
Mid stranger scenes her foot shall rove.
Nor let thy tender care decay—
The soul of woman lives in love.
And shouldst thou, wondering, mark a tear,
Unconscious from her eyelids break,
Be pitiful, and soothe the fear
That man's strong heart may ne'er partake.

A mother yields her gem to thee,
On thy true breast to sparkle rare;
She places 'neath thy household tree
The idol of her fondest care;
And by thy trust to be forgiven,
When judgment wakes in terror wild,
By all thy treasured hopes of heaven,
Deal gently with the widow's child.[43]

America's delight in graveyard poetry was an aspect of sentimentalism of Mrs. Hemans's poetry. Her "Voice of Spring," written in 1823, "became as familiar as the music of some popular composer when brought to our doors by wandering minstrels."[44] The poem closes with Mrs. Hemans's invariable death knell:

They are gone from amongst you, the young and fair,
Ye have lost the gleam of their shining hair!

[43] Lydia H. Sigourney, *Poems* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1849), p. 255.

[44] *Chorley's Memorials*, I, 113.

But I know of a land where there falls no blight.
I shall find them there with their eyes of light.
Where Death, 'midst the blooms by the morn may dwell,
I tarry no longer,—farewell, farewell.

What quantity of tears must have been shed over such mortuary poems as: "The Hour of Death"; "To a Departed Spirit"; "The Death Day of Körner"; "The Grave of Körner"; "He Never Smiled Again"; "Ellen's Grave"; "Burial of the Emigrant's Child"; "The Bereaved Father"; "Death of an Infant"—written by Mrs. Sigourney or Mrs. Hemans.

This graveyard note was a marked eighteenth-century influence which is also conspicuous in much of Bryant's poetry, notably *Thanatopsis,* the writing of which had been influenced by the young poet's perusal of Kirk White's melancholy poems and Blair's *Grave.*[45]

Throughout the period we find the more popular mind turning to the sentimentality of Mrs. Sigourney and Mrs. Hemans, while the cultured found satisfaction in the poetry of the school of Pope. The essential Wordsworth naturally did not appeal to a public with such tastes.

VI

In much the same manner noted in Byron's satirical comments on Wordsworth we find much unjust criticism in the British magazines; the most unfair occurred in the pages of Jeffrey's magazine, the powerful and influential *Edinburgh Review.* This magazine was established in 1802, the same year in which a new edition of the *Lyri-*

[45] See Parke Godwin, *Biography of Bryant,* I, 37, 97.

cal Ballads was published. The *Review* was originated by a group of young men, enterprising and witty, most of whom were lawyers. Bent upon attracting attention in politics and literature, they adopted "a dashing and fearless style of criticism." They were no respecters of persons; they spared neither "the old nor the venerable." Sensing public opinion, they made their attacks upon those prominent in politics or literature, in a daring and reckless manner. The superficial public, pleased to see in print what it had long thought, read, smiled complacently, and patted itself on the back, taking to itself the credit for the brilliant and witty remarks that graced the pages of the *Review*. Wordsworth's early editions had been unnoticed by the lofty young men who controlled these magazines. It was not until 1807, when two new volumes of Wordsworth's poems were published, that the Edinburgh reviewers deemed the poet worthy of their consideration. They then expressed themselves as being "glad of the opportunity of attending somewhat more particularly to his pretensions." The doctrines of Wordsworth were discussed in the most contemptuous manner; they were incorrectly stated, and poems which later were recognized as choicest gems were made objects for sneers and jests.[46]

The quotations made by the *Edinburgh Review* were incomplete and unfair. If now and then a few extracts were granted as good and as showing originality and pathos on the part of the poet, the critic took care that any favorable impression which might be produced

[46] *New Englander* (1851), IX, 597–98.

by such commendable quotations was offset by ridicule. The whole effect of the criticism was to "raise a laugh against the Poet and prevent his works from being read or sought after."[47] As an illustration of an unfair quotation, Jeffrey cited the poorest verse in the "Address to the Sons of Burns After Visiting Their Father's Grave," of which he said, "Nothing was more miserable."[48]

> . . . . Nineteen out of twenty who were asked what they thought of Wordsworth would answer with a laugh and sneer. Think of Wordsworth! What should they think of him but that he was a puling nursery rhymster, a rival of Mother Goose, a manufacturer of foolish verses about Betty Foy and Peter Bell and a boat shaped like a crescent moon. Did not the Edinburgh Review say so and did it not quote line after line to establish its assertions?

In discussing the vehement opposition that greeted Wordsworth on his appearance as a poet, a critic in an issue of *Living Age* (1850),[49] in a reprint from the *North British Review,* quoted the following lines of Byron, which we have noted:

> "Pedlars," and "boats," and wagons
> Oh ye Shades
> Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?[50]

These lines, the critic said, expressed "the universal feeling" of the early British critics.

The result of all this upon provincial America, always servile in literary matters to the mother-country, was to build up prejudice against Wordsworth that was not to be broken down for a generation. Not only were

[47] *N. A. Review,* XVIII (April, 1824), 360–62.

[48] This verse was afterward omitted by Wordsworth.

[49] XXVI, 583. [50] P. 25.

American reviews largely colored by the attitude of the British critics, but in many cases unfavorable reviews were reprinted. We have noted one from the *North British Review* and will use one more reprint from a British magazine.[51] This criticism is in the form of a dialogue between Christopher North and Timothy Tickler. "Christopher North" was the nom de plume of John Wilson, professor of moral philosophy in Edinburgh University from 1820 to 1851, a brilliant scholar, poet, story-writer, essayist, wit, and critic. He was a contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine* for thirty-five years, from the time it was founded in 1817 until 1852, two years before his death. The principal part of the editorship fell into Wilson's hands, and he made it a powerful and popular periodical, which destroyed the force of the *Edinburgh Review*.

The far-renowned *Noctes Ambrosianae* which contributed mainly to the celebrity of *Blackwood's Magazine* were commenced in 1822 and continued for thirteen years. The *Noctes* were full of information abundant in personalities, violent in politics, dictatorial in literary matters, but always able, acute, bold and eloquent.[52]

Wilson was a personal friend and admirer of Wordsworth. He was one of his earliest, most enthusiastic, and also discriminating critics. The attention of Wilson was first attracted to the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1801 or 1802, when he was a boy of sixteen or seventeen at Glasgow

[51] Reprint in *Museum*, VII (1825), 452–56; "Noctes Ambrosianae No. 21," *Blackwood's Magazine*, Vol. XVIII (September, 1825).

[52] Dr. Skelton MacKenzie, *Life of Professor Wilson*, Introduction —"Essay to *Noctes Ambrosianae*," II, 21–22.

College; and he was one of the few who at that time recognized Wordsworth's genius. In his long essay on Wordsworth, written in 1841, he declared: "In ten pages of the 'Excursion' there shall be found more signal instances of choice and original adaptation to the thought than in as many volumes of what at one time has passed for decent poetry."[53] Yet Wilson, in this essay, does not exonerate Wordsworth entirely from "prolixity of style and a choice of prosaic expressions."

Wilson was interested in America, and America in Wilson. His daughter, Mrs. Gordon, in her *Memoirs of Christopher North,* remarks:

> There is no literary man of our land more highly prized or better appreciated in America than Professor Wilson. In that country his name is respected and his writings are well-known. I have often heard him speak of Americans in terms of high appreciation. He knew many and received all who came to see him with much interest and kindness; lovingly talking with them on the literary interests of their country; giving his opinion freely on the merits and demerits of its writers, for they were all known to them.[54]

Wilson's appreciation in America is attested by the fact that all of his writings have been reprinted in this country.

Robert Sym, whose pseudonym of "Timothy Tickler" became as well known as that of "Christopher North" for Wilson, was the uncle of Wilson. He was also an early contributor to *Blackwood's,* a man acknowledged to have good literary taste, but one often

[53] *Blackwood's Magazine,* XLIX, 359–71. [54] P. 426.

tinged with a keen and biting satire. Christopher North and Timothy Tickler, in the "Noctes Ambrosianae" dialogues often perpetrated jokes on the great men of the time. As might be expected Wordsworth did not escape their keen wit as the following example shows:

Christopher North: Wordsworth writes like an idiot; and never more so than when he said of Milton, "his soul was like a star and dwelt apart." For it dwelt in tumult, and mischief, and rebellion. Wordsworth is in all things the reverse of Milton—a good man and a bad poet.

Timothy Tickler: What!—That Wordsworth whom Maga[55] cries up as the Prince of Poets?

North: Be it so; I must humour some of the fancies of some of my friends. But had that man been a great poet, he would have produced a deep and lasting impression on the minds of England; whereas his verses are becoming less and less known every day and he is, in good truth, one of the illustrious obscure.

Tickler: And yet the youngsters in that absurd magazine of yours set him up to the stars as their idol and kiss his very feet, as if the toes were of gold.

North: Well! Well! Let them have their own way awhile. I confess that the "Excursion" is the worst poem of any character in the English language. It contains about two hundred sonorous lines, some of which appear to be fine, even in the sense, as well as the sound. The remaining seventy-three hundred are quite ineffectual.

Tickler: I do not know whether my gallantry blinds me, but I prefer much of the female to the male poetry of the day. There is Joanna Baillie.[56] Is there not more genius, passion, poetry in the tragedy of Count Basil than in any book of Wordsworth?

[55] Name for *Blackwood's Magazine.*

[56] "Joanna Baillie, author of *Plays of the Passions,* and other dramas, with *Metrical Legends* and a prose vindication of the Unita-

North: Ten times.

Both are enthusiastic over the poetry of Mrs. Hemans, L. E. L., and Mrs. Tighe.[57]

Tickler: And what the devil would you be at with your great brawling He-Poets from the Lakes, who go round and round about, strutting upon nothing, like so many turkey-cocks gobbling with a long pendant at their noses, and frightening away the fair and lovely swans as they glide down the waters of immortality?

North: Just so, Tickler—and then how ludicrously he overrates his own powers. This we all do, but Wordsworth's pride is like that of a straw-crowned king in Bedlam. For example, he indited some silly lines to a hedge-sparrow's nest with five eggs, and years afterwards, in a fit of exultation, told the world, in another poem equally childish, that the *Address to the Sparrow* was "one strain that would never die." Ha! ha! ha! Can that be a great man?

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rian Creed. Sir Walter Scott, who greatly esteemed her, superintended the production of her "Family Legend" at Edinburgh Theatre, "where it was very successful" (note on page 103 of *Noctes Ambrosianae* [Wilson ed., New York: R. Skelton MacKenzie, 1867]).

[57] (*a*) "Felicia Dorothea Hemans, whose Records of Woman, Forest Sanctuary and minor lyrics have placed her on the list of modern poets" (*ibid.*).

b) "Letitia Elizabeth Landon (Maclean by marriage), born, 1802, died in Africa in 1838. She published a volume of poems in 1821, called "The Fate of Adelaide" and from that time until her death was known by her numerous and usually beautiful poems in the Literary Gazette and various magazines, as well as all the annuals, and by several separate works in prose and verse. Unhappy love had formed the staple of her effusions for several years, but she had learned to think, and had studied to express her feelings with the requisite concentration, when she died" (*ibid.*).

c) "Mrs. Tighe, an Irish lady, author of a clever poem called 'Psyche' in the Spenserian Stanza and published after her premature death" (*ibid.*).

Tickler, in his final remarks, said that, upon meeting Wordsworth, with his "solemn, pedantic, awkward, out-of-the-worldish look about him, you are puzzled about his profession till he begins to speak, and then to be sure, you set him down at once for a Methodist preacher."

This dialogue, which, as we have noted, easily found its way into an American magazine, the *Museum,* influenced American writers to try their hands at what the anti-Wordsworthians would consider clever sarcasm. We find an illustration of such in an old American magazine, the *Club Room* of 1820.[58] The title of the article is "The Sea of Poets." The author dreams of "a vast ocean whose surface was studded with the sails of vessels of various sizes and descriptions, which were all stretching their canvas and posting away in different directions, and with different degrees of rapidity." The sterns of these "marine vehicles" were "fashioned like the back of a book, bound, lettered, and gilt." Among the names the dreamer recognized those of his old acquaintances, who stood at "the helm and managed the course of their vessels." All

were bound ultimately for the same port, but there seemed to be among them a great deficiency of nautical skill and knowledge; for there were scarcely two who took the same direction or trimmed their sails alike. They tacked about as if they had neither chart nor compass! and, though there were a thousand who pretended to know all about it, yet there was no agreement of opinion among even these wise-acres. . . . . This sea was subject to some

[58] This magazine appeared only four times—February, March, April, and July. The name of the author, H. J. Ware, appears in pencil at the top of the article in the University of Michigan copy.

smart squalls and some tolerable hurricanes which rendered the navigation not a little dangerous for small craft, and some of them were going constantly to the bottom, unnoticed and forgotten, though they occasionally made a dreadful hue and cry and confounded splashing when they found themselves sinking.

It was only "by letting off loose canvas and cutting away a spare yard, or even mast sometimes," that a few of the crafts succeeded in reaching the Cape of Prosperity. "Around the cape lay the City of Immortality to which most professed to be bound, though but few set their faces thitherward with much fixedness of spirit."

After observing the crafts of Campbell and Moore, Wordsworth is seen coming along straddling a "pine log." The writer's comment,

Wordsworth, everybody knows, is a queer dog, and like the man who said fingers were made before forks, he said that pine logs were made before ships, and that the only way to get well through was to follow nature. He had heard of our North American squirrels, who, when they wish to cross a river get a piece of bark or driftwood, mount it, and sticking up their tails to the wind, float majestically over. Just so Wordsworth took to himself a famous pine log and straddling across it with his feet in the water, held out his coat flaps to the breeze, and got along better than we would have thought, but taking in occasionally a mouthful of salt water and finding it rather difficult to keep his balance.

The Cape of Prosperity could not be reached without passing through the Gulf of Criticism, in which "many an honest soul went to the bottom." Among the greatest perils of this gulf were privateers and pirates, who "pretended to be custom-house officers or pilots, ..." One of these vessels "cut the water like a sword,

and plied about hither and thither with the most astonishing velocity. . . . ." The captain had no mercy on a victim. Once he fixed his eye on one,

> he bent his course for him as fast as the wind could carry him, and if he did not run him under the water the very first dash, it was not for the want of a good will to do it. He had a particular spite against a few, and never did he miss the chance to run foul of Southey, Coleridge or Wordsworth.

Undoubtedly the vessel which "cut the water like a sword" was the *Edinburgh Review,* whose captain was the merciless Jeffrey; and the favorite victim, Wordsworth, whose poetry the satirical critic *could not* or *would not* appreciate and against whom he was ever ready to raise a laugh. Both of the articles which have been quoted are typical examples of broad humor degenerated into ridicule, which got a laugh at Wordsworth's expense, and which of course retarded the Poet's advance into general favor in this country.

In looking back over this period, we see that the literary tastes of the American people varied. There was one type of popular mind which found an aesthetic delight only in the exciting and sensational; another type to which exaggerated sentimentalism only made an appeal—a type which took joy in effusive emotions and in tears. On the other hand, there was a cultured class with sober, conservative tastes, which clung to eighteenth-century classicism with all its conventionality and artificiality. All of these tastes were inimical to Wordsworth's poetry. The unfriendly attitude of the dazzling and popular idol, Byron, whose influences had much

weight in this country, and of the British press, especially the *Edinburgh Review,* which dominated public opinion in this country as well as abroad, were also effective causes in retarding the fortunes of Wordsworth in America. However, as I have previously pointed out, there were other influences, tendencies and interests—inherent durable traits—which, with the spread of culture in this country, were bound to bring about a reaction favorable to Wordsworth.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

I

Wordsworth, as I noted at the beginning of the preceding chapter, was little known in this country before 1824. A reprint of the *Lyrical Ballads* had been made in 1802. No more of his poems were printed in America until 1824. By that year the poet came into his own. The "This will never do" with which Jeffrey introduced his criticism of *The Excursion* proved a false augury. Slowly England and America came around to Wordsworth. No longer was he ignored and neglected. The magazines gave much space to him. His principles of poetry were explained and made the subject of comment. Copious extracts were made from his poems. The public demanded his works. Whereas it had been the fashion a few years before to decry the poet, it was now the fashion to praise him. His reputation was established. The harsh and unjust critics were silent. The reviewers made sincere attempts to be fair, to be just. They made an all-round study of Wordsworth's poetry; thus the picture obtained of the poet's work is not one-sided. If any unfavorable criticism appeared, it was offset by favorable comment. The reviewers in this country seemed to wish to make amends for their past neglect and to set Wordsworth right with America.

While the unfavorable criticism of the poet between 1824 and 1850, to which I have had access, is small in bulk in comparison with the favorable comments, we must examine it in order that our knowledge of the attitude of America toward Wordsworth during these years, may be complete.

A writer, in a criticism of Wordsworth written for the *North American Review,* in 1824,[1] notes as an "error" of the poet, a habit of talking too much; of lacking the power of discrimination. Considering all of his meditations of equal importance, all of which must be recorded, Wordsworth, according to this critic, obliges the reader to dig up his beauties "from the midst of much worthlessness; like fair statues, and bright gems and rare models from heaps of rubbish and beds of ashes." This seemingly adverse criticism, however, merges into a commendatory attitude toward this "offensive" custom of Wordsworth; for the critic acknowledges that the readers gain by this "unrestricted freedom of expression. Many of Wordsworth's highest bits of imagination," he thinks, "may be struck out in the course of this profuse and careless creation. If the prodigality were checked," the reviewer continues, "the bounty might be missed; that being the case, we desire no change and would deplore an economy attended with so great a privation." Does not the modern student of Wordsworth agree with both sides of this criticism? There are, indeed, long passages in *The Excursion* which are tedious and boresome; yet we are glad to endure some mental discomfort in

[1] XVIII, 356–71.

traveling over sandy deserts, knowing we will soon arrive at a delightful and refreshing oasis.

In the midst of words of praise running through the 1830's a sharp adverse criticism is leveled against the poet now and then which prevents the discussions from becoming monotonous. A critic in the *North American Review* of 1832[2] stated that as far as rustic simplicity is concerned, it did not compare with that of Burns. In the words of this writer, "The personal struggle to accommodate himself to his theory frequently involves him in a dialect belonging neither to poetry nor common life," and the insertion "now and then of a homely epithet or name serves only (we say it with all deference) to make him extremely ridiculous."

In 1837, a critic in the *Southern Literary Messenger,*[3] one who is an ardent admirer of Wordsworth and most of his work, expresses the opinion that Wordsworth's extreme simplicity of feeling and unadorned vigor of language sometimes degenerated into "trivialities and mawkishness," and too often were his subjects chosen from the humble ranks. "Pedlars, beggars, and idiots," continued the critic, "do not create the same interest for readers as do more refined, exalted characters."

Although *The Excursion,* because of its moral and religious tone, was a popular poem in America during this period, as later discussion in this chapter shows, it did not entirely escape unfavorable criticism. A writer

[2] XXXV (July), 174. [3] III, 706.

in the *American Quarterly Review* of March, 1832,[4] in an article on "American Lake Poetry" referred to *The Excursion* as "dull and drawling," a poem which no one had the patience to read through. He also deplored the influence which he thought the poem had on many of Wordsworth's followers, who, the reviewer thought, erroneously undervalued the "metrical numbers and poetical diction" of the poem and availed themselves "of the license his doctrine admitted and his practice sanctioned to write slovenly and ragged verses."

A similar criticism occurs later in the *North American Review* for April, 1847.[5] In this article Wordsworth is accused of leading the way to an exaggerated manner of babbling about green fields—of carrying the "worship of nature to a ridiculous excess"; of falling into "dizzy raptures" not only over what is "beautiful and grand in the outward world, but over low and disgusting objects, which no poetry can elevate above their intrinsic meanness and vulgarity." According to this writer, Wordsworth "often adorns his vagaries with so much magnificence of diction and splendor of imagery, widely departing, it is true, from his own theory, by the very richness of these ornaments, that we can pardon the unrestrained fancies which he renders thus gorgeous and imposing." The reviewer could with all patience hear Wordsworth say,

> To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that lie too deep for tears,

[4] XI, 174. [5] LXIV, 402–35.

but he found it unendurable "to see one of these Noodles [his servile imitators] get down on his knees before a pig weed and remain there mute with admiration, or standing open-mouthed after a humble-bee and calling it a 'yellow-breeched philosopher.'" "If this disorder had not passed the use of medicine," continued this satirist, "we would counsel them to go and study Cowper's *Task,* and learn to be ashamed of their mystic ravings and transcendental silliness."

Wordsworth's sonnets on "The Punishment of Death," belonging to the early forties, evoked severe condemnation on the part of a critic writing for the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* of 1842.[6] The entire article of sixteen pages deals with the series of sonnets which had caused the critic great distress and pain. Deeply moved by the subject, he thus rhetorically expresses himself: "To behold (Wordsworth) take down the sacred lyre and attune its chords to the harsh clanking of the victim's chain, seems almost a profanation and a sacrilege—as though a harp of heaven were transported from its proper sphere and its congenial themes, to be struck by some impious hand to the foul and hideous harmonies of hell." The entire series of sonnets is given and comments made on each. The critic expresses the opinion that Wordsworth had not sufficiently investigated the subject, that his arguments in favor of capital punishment were not sound, and that his knowledge of the character of criminals was faulty. The writing of the sonnets was attributed

[6] V, 272–88.

to a sense of moral duty and must have been undertaken with much "reluctance and pain." The day cannot be far distant, the writer declared, "when he will regret to have thus lent the influence of his muse to retard the advent of that hour which is to witness the total abolition of this worse than useless barbarism."

An article in a later edition of *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*,[7] on "Wordsworth's Sonnets to Liberty," makes a brief denunciatory reference to the Death Sonnets, as follows: "They are a blot upon the escutcheon of our author, to be effaced only by the consideration that they present the sole instance of his deficiency as a philanthropic and truly Christian poet. They are not to be defended on any grounds and are only to be forgotten."

In addition to the dissenting note in the article, "The Sonnets on Punishment of Death," occurs another in the same article, in the confession on the part of the critic to "Wordsworth's defect as a heroic poet," as one who fails "to stir the national heart or rouse freemen into glorious action." This failure of Wordsworth is attributed by this critic to his equable temper and lack of passion. "There is more of the storm and passion in a canto of Byron," he says, "than in a volume of Wordsworth." This lack of these qualities, however, does not cause the critic to swing his allegiance to Byron. Instead, his preference is given to the "unimpassioned Wordsworth."

In all of this adverse criticism there is some truth,

[7] XII (February, 1843), 158–64.

from which a modern critic would not greatly diverge; but it is often exaggerated and sometimes throws emphasis on just the immaterial issues where it does not belong. All modern critics would admit that parts of *The Excursion* are "dull and drawling," yet at the same time recognize the fact that it contains hundreds of passages that are beautiful, interesting, and uplifting, and many narratives full of touching pathos, which, we shall see, made a wide appeal in America during this period. The writer of the article on "American Lake Poetry" is right in his statement that many American imitators of *The Excursion* produced "slovenly and ragged verses." The cause is found in the fact that they adopted the worst peculiarities of the Lake poets of England. The Cockney School is the name given to these worthless imitators—a term used both abroad and in this country.

The writer in the *North American Review* who also attacked these "servile imitators" carries his criticism too far when he classes Emerson among the "Noodles" and denounces the American poet's reference to the humble-bee as a "yellow-breeched philosopher." Such a conception is no more an example of "transcendental silliness" than is that of Wordsworth when he speaks of the "function apostolical" of the daisy.

Exception, too, may be taken to a comparison between the "rustic simplicity" of Wordsworth and Burns. Owing to the wide difference between the purpose, spirit, and style of each poet, the fairness of such a comparison may well be questioned. Such comparison can be made only as regards general suggestiveness. Words-

worth's acknowledgment of his indebtedness to the Scotch poet is made in his poem written in 1803, after he had visited the grave of Burns:

> I mourned with thousands, but as one
> More deeply grieved, for he was gone
> Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
> And showed my youth
> How verse may build a princely throne
> On humble truth.[8]

The statement that Wordsworth's characters from humble life "do not create the same interest for readers as do more refined, exalted characters" is not borne out by the pages of the American annuals, early readers, and magazines of the period; the quotations from Wordsworth's poems found in these publications prove conclusively that Margaret, Ellen, Ruth, Michael, The Brothers, even Goody Blake and Harry Gill—in fact, all of Wordsworth's characters from humble life—made a popular appeal, rather than such characters as Laodamia or Dion.

It seems strange to us, so far removed from the current event which incited Wordsworth to write the "Sonnets on Punishment of Death," that the critics became excited over them. The sentiments expressed in the "Sonnets" are not the characteristic features of Wordsworth's poetry. It is true little can be said in defense of them. Wordsworth may be commended for his courage in opposing a measure he thought wrong, but he would undoubtedly have shown better poetical judgment had

[8] See Henry Hudson, *Studies in William Wordsworth*, p. 123.

he chosen another medium for expressing his views on the subject; the theme is a dismal one, and most critics would agree that the hangman is an inappropriate hero for a sonnet.

From the point of view of passion in poetry, it may be remarked that the writer of the article in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* has the mistaken idea of many Wordsworth readers. Wordsworth's poetry certainly lacks the exciting and unbridled passion of Byron's work, and, for that reason did not appeal to many readers; yet such poems as "Sonnets to Venice," to "Switzerland," to "Toussaint"; the "Indignation of a High-minded Spaniard"; and the "Sonnets to the Tyrolese" are full of impassioned spirit.

II

The adverse criticism of this period is more than counterbalanced by that which is favorable. The reasons for an advance of Wordsworth's interest in this country, aside from the progress made in literary culture, may be found in the death of Byron, in America's nature setting, the influence of Byrant's poetry, and in certain qualities in Wordsworth's poetry which met a corresponding response in the American temperament of the period.

Coincident with the noticeable advance of Wordsworth into favor in America, was the death of Byron in 1824. When his death occurred at Missolonghi, "The English and Continental press," writes Professor W. E.

Leonard in his book, *Byron and Byronism in America,*[9] "made him the subject of the hour and published countless worthless monodies in his honor. Equally great was the shock in America, and equally countless and more worthless the monodies—The *North American Review* begins a fifty-two page review of Lord Byron's poems: 'The death of Lord Byron, without depressing the price of stocks or affecting the election of President, has produced a deep and general feeling of regret throughout the country.'" Professor Leonard states that "after Byron's death, the furore manifestly waned."[10] He further declares: "If one institute, for comparison's sake, a brief examination of the newspapers from 1824 down to 1860, one will find Byron gradually losing ground—Of magazine articles it may be mentioned that Shelley, Wordsworth, and Keats seemed to have claimed more and more attention."

Byron had, very early in his career, emerged "from the horizon like a brilliant meteor. From his brilliant rank in society, he attracted universal attention. The peculiar circumstances under which he came forward as a candidate for public favor won all hearts to his side. The praise of his personal beauty was a gifted cup of flattery. No great name ever appeared in English poetry with such conspicuous omens to cheer it on."[11] Byron had been extremely popular in this country as well as

[9] Pp. 32–35.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 112.

[11] *U.S. Democratic Review,* VI (April, 1856), 286.

in England.[12] America was interested in him personally. A country in a state of excitement over war abroad and revolution at home was naturally attracted to this soldier-poet, who threw himself bodily and spiritually into the cause of oppressed nations. The people were interested in the revolutionary poet who was an active participant in the cause of liberty. His poetry, breathing forth this same spirit of freedom and characterized throughout by a passionate nature and excited imagination, brilliant and dazzling, was bound to make more of a popular appeal than the more quiet nature beauties of Wordsworth's poetry. But now Byron was gone. Time and culture had brought more discrimination on the part of the critics. The poetry of passion and sense was gradually giving way to that of thought and genuine sentiment. A revolution in taste had been effected.

With this revolution in American literary taste Bryant had much to do. He had read the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1810 before he was seventeen. The effect of this reading upon the young American poet has been revealed by Richard Henry Dana:

> I shall never forget with what feeling my friend Bryant, some years ago, described to me the effect produced upon him by his

[12] "It was not only fashionable but almost indispensable for every youth to be Byronic. Of course, though, at Cambridge, we had not the energy nor perhaps the courage to be Corsairs or Laras, yet nevertheless we enjoyed the poetry and especially the later poetry of Lord Byron, as something very cognate to our dispositions and tempers, probably not the best of either. But we did see that there was something in the poems of Wordsworth and Shelley which satisfied what we knew to be our better and higher aspirations" (*Transactions of the Wordsworth Society*, No. 7, pp. 15–16).

first meeting with Wordsworth's ballads. He said that, upon opening the book, a thousand springs seemed to gush up at once in his heart, and the face of Nature of a sudden to change into a strange freshness and life. He had felt the sympathetic touch from an according mind, and you see how instantly his powers and affections shot over the earth and through his kind.[13]

Parke Godwin, son-in-law and biographer of Bryant, in quoting Dana's remark, stated that, while Dana's partiality for Wordsworth "may have colored his language a little, there was no doubt that Bryant regarded the volume as a precious discovery. It introduced him . . . . to a kindred mind . . . . to one endowed, like himself, with pure and simple tastes, and exquisitely alive to all the sweet and gentle influences of external nature."

Bryant immediately became a convert. An eighteenth-century influence still lingers, however, in much of his poetry. It is seen especially in its solemn and melancholy march to the grave; yet there is a new note of delicacy, simplicity, sincerity, and vitality in his verses, which is far removed from that of the preceding period. He rejected from now on certain characteristics of the eighteenth century noted in the "Embargo" and other youthful poems, and henceforth produced poems much in the manner of Wordsworth, though always lacking Wordsworth's mysticism.

With Bryant, American literature begins. He is the first poet in this country to be recognized abroad. Appearing at a time when the literature was unrestrained,

[13] Parke Godwin, *Bryant, Life and Works,* I, 104.

when the popular taste was characterized by the love of excitement, his calm restraint augured well for the interests of American tastes and letters. Bryant's first collected edition of poems appeared in 1821. While his poetry was of "too exalted a strain," remarks Onderdonk,[14] "to win immediate popular applause," yet he became, in general, a favorite with the public, and his poems are found quoted in newspapers from Maine to Florida and in many periodicals of the first quarter of the century. According to a writer in the *North American Review*,[15] Bryant's most popular poems were, *Thanatopsis*, which "everyone in the country with any literary taste has learned by heart, "To a Water-Fowl," "The Yellow Violet," and "Green River."

Bryant was a poet of nature. "He caught the spirit of the messages whispered by the trees, sung by the rivers, and chanted by the sea. Trees and flowers, the sky and the stars, the sea, the tides, and the winds, the thunder-storm and the hurricane, spoke to him in 'a various language,' which he interpreted to his fellowmen."[16]

To a people who dwelt in the villages of America, "where nature's voices were ever speaking," a nature poet would ultimately be welcome. America had the proper setting for an appreciation of nature poetry—a setting formed of mighty lakes, fertile valleys, tremendous cataracts, boundless plains, deep rivers, rolling

[14] James L. Onderdonk, *History of American Verse*, p. 144.

[15] LXVIII, 195.

[16] Onderdonk, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

oceans, trackless forests, brilliant sunsets.[17] The fact that the American people were slow in displaying their appreciation of the nature surrounding them—a nature clothed in rare beauties, magnificent splendor, and lofty grandeur—was due to two causes: In the beginning of the history of America, nature presented to the colonists a formidable aspect—one to be conquered with ax and muscle, that civilization in the country might be possible. Nature to them presented a grim reality rather than an aesthetic pleasure. When their homes in this American wilderness became established and they had leisure and inclination to admire the beauties and grandeur of nature, to yield to its aesthetic influence and to express it poetically, they naturally followed the example of England and became addicted to a conventional and artificial treatment of nature. There had been American nature poetry before Bryant, the most promising of which was seen in the work of Freneau; but in none of the predecessors of Bryant do we find the "imaginative sympathy" which characterizes his poetry. Bryant set the example "of going close to nature and describing her as she appears here and not as she had been sung by writers of other lands."[18]

Byron, with his "Roll on ye dark and deep blue Ocean—roll!" quoted frequently in the annuals, readers, and magazines of the period, had awakened a love for the wild and exciting in nature; while Bryant's poetry had helped to awaken a feeling for the calm and

[17] See Norman Foerster, *Nature in American Literature*, p. 2.

[18] Onderdonk, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

solemn in nature. The effect of Wordsworth's poetry on that of Bryant was like that of good seed falling on fertile ground. The soil was ready and responded quickly to this helpful foreign influence. Bryant, in turn, did much to turn the interest away from the exciting, sensational, artificial, and conventional, and to direct it to an interest in Wordsworth's poetry.

Aside from the nature element in Bryant's poetry, which aided in cultivating a taste for the poetry of Wordsworth, there are two other outstanding characteristics of the verses of the American poet which prepared the soil for an appreciation of Wordsworth: its contemplative tone and its highly moral character. An article on Bryant, in the *North American Review* of April, 1926.[19] commends the "moral and devotional tone" of Bryant's verse, as being conducive to "higher and holier emotion. No sentiment," states the critic, "or expression ever drops from him which the most rigid moralist could wish to blot." He rejoices that America has a poet who "in the jar and bustle of our American life can,—by ennobling thoughts of man and his destiny, induce the most worldly to give their eyes an occasional glance upward and the most selfish to feel that the love of God and man is better than the love of Mammon." Bryant played an important rôle in raising the literary taste in this country—in creating a liking for sincere, unaffected poetry, and poetry with a moral and meditative tone.

That the love of nature, simplicity, faith in the

[19] XXII, 432–33.

dominant mind of man, and moral and religious sentiments were the elements in Wordsworth's poetry which appealed to the popular mind of America can be illustrated from the selections found in the annuals, early readers, and magazines. In *Poetry of Flowers* we find, "To a Daisy"; "To the Small Celandine"; "The Primrose of the Rock"; "The Daffodils." "Lucy (Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower)" occurs in the *Poetic Wreath.* The *Lady's Album* contains "The Green Linnet" and an extract from *Tintern Abbey.*

The "Cottage Girl" or "Country Girl" is a popular poem in *The Lily.*[20] The poem was originally written by Wordsworth in 1828 for the English annual called the *Keepsake,* and was suggested by a picture. Wordsworth said he thought the name of the artist was Holmes.[21] Other poems selected for simplicity or humbleness of character, are: "The Old Cumberland Beggar" in the *Poetic Wreath;*[22] "We are Seven," in the *Hyacinth;*[23] and "Goody Blake and Harry Gill" in the *American First Class Book.*[24] "Goody Blake and Harry Gill" is prefaced with a note from the *Farmer's Museum.* The writer of the note relates the incident from the Zoönomia of Darwin, on which the poem is based, and emphasizes "consciousness of wrong" as one of the causes of the rustic's losing his reason. He closes the note with the following comment: "On this singular story is

[20] See editions for 1831, 1832, and 1838.

[21] See "The Gleaner," *Wordsworth's Complete Poetical Works,* Boston and New York, 1909 (Houghton, Mifflin Co.), p. 659.

[22] 1840. [23] 1831. [24] 1835.

founded the following ballad, which is in the genuine spirit of ancient English song, and shows, by proof irrefragable, that *simplicity* and the *language of ordinary life* may be connected with the most exquisite poetry." The appeal of the moral and simple qualities of this poem has so blinded the literary judgment of this amateur critic as to call forth his final exaggerated statement.

A striking resemblance to lines quoted from Emerson's "Self-Reliance" in chapter ii, is noted in a little Wordsworth poem entitled "True Dignity," which appears in the *Lady's Album*[25] and is recognized as the conclusion of "Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew Tree":

> True dignity abides with him alone
> Who, in the silent hours of inward thought,
> Can still suspect, and still revere himself,
> In lowliness of heart.

A poem found in the *American First Class Book* of 1835, "The Deaf Man's Grave," taken from *The Excursion*,[26] illustrates this same idea of reverence for the individual: The deaf man grew up "in lowliness of soul"; for him the streams were soundless—

> . . . . Evermore
> Were all things silent whereso 'er he moved;
> Yet by the solace of his own pure thoughts
> Upheld, he duteously pursued the sound
> Of rural labors. . . . .

Industriously he tended to the fields and flocks and won the respect and love of all about him. Books were ready

[25] 1839. [26] Book VII, ll. 396–481.

comrades. They beguiled his leisure hours, refreshed his thoughts, elevated his spirit,

> and bestowed
> Upon his life an outward dignity
> Which all acknowledged.

One of the selections found in the *Educational Reader,*[27] bearing the title, "The Patriarch of the Vale," is also taken from *The Excursion.*[28] In these lines the indomitable mind of the Patriarch is portrayed. He had been bereft of all his family:

> All gone—all vanished! deprived and bare,
> How will he face the remnant of his life?
> A man of hope, and *forward-looking mind*[28a]
> Even to the last! Such was he, *unsubdued.*

Another quality in Wordsworth's poetry which appealed to the American people of this period, in which sentiment was an outstanding characteristic, is that to which I referred in chapter iii as "sentimental morality," which Professor Oscar J. Campbell[29] defines as "pity for undeserved suffering and the belief that such pity was a moral agent." The purpose of such stories, Professor Campbell points out, is to uplift morally the one witnessing the sad scene or hearing or reading the pathetic tale. The idea is carried over from the sentimentalism of the eighteenth century and can be traced

[27] 1845. [28] Book VII, ll. 242–90.

[28a] The italics are the author's.

[29] *Sentimental Morality in Wordsworth's Narrative Poetry,* "Wisconsin University Studies in Language and Literature, English Department," No. 2 (Madison, 1920).

back to the old Greek tragedy which sets forth the idea that purification is the purpose of tragic suffering. However, what appealed to American taste was not the belief that tears for undeserved suffering were " a tower to virtue friendly," but the stories themselves by which the pity was evoked.

The two most striking poems of Wordsworth of this nature, are the stories of Margaret and Ellen in *The Excursion*. These two narratives are found as separate poems in the annuals.[30] The hearts of the readers go out in compassion to these victims of love: Margaret, deserted by her husband, living in heart-broken and aimless widowhood for nine years, when she dies in her ruined home; Ellen, deserted by her faithless lover, living the life of a penitent Magdalene, kneeling from day to day upon the grave of her child, and weeping piteously, until she too, pines away, and is buried by its side.

Closely related to this sentimentalism was a species of religious emotionalism which delighted in certain poems taken from *The Excursion;* for instance, "The Good Clergyman,"[31] "Trust in Providence,"[32] and "The Pervading Principle of the Universe"[33]—all of which are found in the *Educational Reader*.

The good clergyman is a "lowly, great, good man," who "lovingly embraced the hill near the chapel."

"A belief in the superintendence of Providence" conveys the religious lesson that:

[30] See *Gift of Love*.

[31] From Book VII, ll. 313–38.

[32] *Ibid.*, Book IV, ll. 34–196.

[33] *Ibid.*, Book IV, ll. 1–92.

> One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists, one only;—an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power,
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good.

A poem in the *American First Class Book*, entitled "The Young Herdsman,"[84] belongs to the same religious class:

> . . . . He had early learned
> To reverence the Volume which displays
> The mystery, the life that can not die;
> But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith;
> There did he see the writing; all things there
> Breathed immortality, revolving life,
> And greatness still revolving;—infinite!
>
> What wonder if his being thus became
> Sublime and comprehensive! low desires,
> Low thoughts had there no place; yet was his heart
> Lowly.

The quoting of these poems testifies to the fact that the editors of the readers regarded Wordsworth as a moral and religious poet worthy to aid in carrying out the desire printed in the Preface to the *American Class Book* written in 1823, that the book shall not only improve the minds of the readers but that

it shall enable them better to understand and discharge their duties in life and lead them to contemplate with pleasure and religious reverence, the character of the great Author of their being,

[84] From *The Excursion*, Book I, ll. 118–243.

as discovered in his works, his providence and his word; and thus help them to attain the end of their Christian faith,—the salvation of their souls.

Criticism of Wordsworth in American magazines, which, beginning with the year 1824, consumes increasing amount of space in the best periodicals, includes evidence of the strength of the religious apeal in Wordsworth's poetry. In these articles *The Excursion,* because of its moral and religious teachings, is a conspicuously quoted poem. An article in the *United States Literary Gazette,* of 1824,[35] contains copious quotations from *The Excursion.* The first quotation consists of twenty-one lines[36] which form part of "The Young Herdsman" quoted in *The American First Class Book.* The critic expresses the opinion that the learned Dr. Johnson would not have made the statement that "religion was an unsuitable subject for poetry," had he not died before *The Excursion* was published. "We think," states the writer, "that the loftiest and most affecting passages of Wordsworth's poetry are those in which he has embodied his religious musings." In support of his view, he makes five long religious quotations from the poem in addition to the one quoted from "The Young Herdsman":

1. How beautiful this dome of sky. . . . .[37]
2. Thou, who didst wrap the cloud
   Of Infancy around us. . . . .[38]

[35] I, 245–49.

[36] *The Excursion,* Book I; ll. 198–217.

[37] Book IV, ll. 34–65.

[38] *Ibid.,* ll. 83–122.

3. Upon the breast of new-created earth
   Man walked. . . . .[39]
4. To a mysteriously united pair
   This place is consecrate. . . . .[40]
5. And whence that tribute? Wherefore
   these regards. . . . .[41]

In 1836 the *Western Messenger* has the following to say: "We love and revere Wordsworth, not so much because a great poet, as because a great Christian Philosopher. His words to us compare with those of Milton and Southey, as the deep human poetry of the gospel does with the superhuman verse of Job and the Prophets." R. L. Rusk[42] attributes the comparison to Wordsworth's later religious teachings.

Wordsworth was looked upon with favor by the critics in the denominational papers, which regarded him as a true Christian poet. The *Methodist Quarterly Review* of 1839[43] contains a long article on "Wordsworth's Poems." Speaking of Wordsworth as "emphatically a religious—nay, a Christian Poet," the critic pronounces this high "eulogium" upon him: that a high moral purpose pervades all of his work; namely, "of inculcating the great lessons of confidence in God, of the weakness of human nature, of human responsibility, and of the high dignities to which God calls the mind of

[39] *Ibid.*, ll. 631–70.

[40] Book V, ll. 903–21.

[41] *Ibid.*, ll. 978–93.

[42] *Literature of the Middle Western Frontier.*

[43] XXI, 449–61.

man!" Lines are quoted from "The Young Herdsman."[44]

The Young Herdsman

> . . . . in such high hour
> Of visitation from the living God,
> Rapt into still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise.
> His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power
> That made him, it was blessedness and love!

Other religious quotations found in this article are: the concluding stanzas of "The Power of Sound," the "Thanksgiving Ode," in which the poet makes an "earnest prayer for a grateful heart, and for a constant sense of the divine presence and blessing," and the conclusion to the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*. The writer does a valuable service in devoting some space to a discussion of the nature and plan of the sonnets, with which probably few readers were familiar.

The critic appreciates the sonnets, not only because of the light which they throw "upon many obscure passages in the history of early Christianity in Great Britain," but also because "they excite a spirit of devotion and faith in the reader." He believes that the labors of Wordsworth have been directed not so much as most readers of the sonnets believed, "to the end of fixing the Establishment more firmly in the affections of the people, but to the far nobler and more congenial purpose of showing that the religion of Jesus Christ con-

[44] *The Excursion*, Book I, ll. 198–213.

tains the only source of genuine happiness, and the only elements of moral progress."

The *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* make a strong appeal also to a writer in the *American Biblical Repository* of 1839.[45] This critic considers these poems "pre-eminent" among Wordsworth's sonnets—to be compared with the sonnets of Milton. The sonnet entitled "Canute," closing:

> . . . . sternest clime
> And rudest age are subject to the thrill
> Of heaven-descended Piety and Song—

is placed next to Milton's "Avenge, Oh Lord."

The view of these critics is neither aesthetic nor philosophical. It is the product of religious sentiment and yearning. They naturally found in the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* Wordsworth the Christian poet rather than Wordsworth the "profound thinker and powerful artist," the view taken by Miss Abbie Potts in her book, *The Ecclesiastical Sonnets*.[46] The history of the church contained in the Sonnets does not appeal to the sentimental religious mind of these Americans so much as the "Poet's confidence in the ultimate triumph of the principles of divine truth over the darkness and corruption that is in the world."[47]

The writer of the article in the *Biblical Repository* confirms my position that the religious sentiment was one outstanding quality in Wordsworth's poetry which appealed to the popular mind of this period. He says

[45] 2d Ser. I, 226–38. [46] P. 1.

[47] *Methodist Quarterly Review*, XXI (O.S., 1839), 460.

that he opens his Wordsworth on Sunday morning after closing his Bible, "to read the *Thanksgiving Ode.*" To him the poem has a "Sabbath morning effect, with a pleasing delight that sweetly prepares us for worship."

No less glorious to this writer is the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." He does not read the poem, as, he remarks, is the custom of many readers, and then abandon it because of its Platonism. He voices an attitude concerning the great "Ode" which time has corroborated: "To the mass of men it will never be known—it requires thought to be understood, and who does not know," he exclaims, "that the mad thousand have no such property!" This writer, considering the poem "a philosophical rhapsody," becomes correspondingly rhapsodic in his comments as he passes from stanza to stanza. This "philosophical rhapsody," in the mind of the critic, consists of a series of "inquiries as to the dark enigma of our being."

This critic may sense the essential spirit of the poem, but his rhapsodical sentiment prevents a deep understanding of the work. Modern critics have revealed the intellectual foundation of the poem ignored by these religious enthusiasts, such as is contained in Professor S. F. Gingerich's essay on Wordsworth.[48] Professor Gingerich defines the essential "seed-thought" of the "Ode," as "a sense of a creative and indestructible force within him [Wordsworth] that would not be subdued by the regular action of the world, and a sense of a spiritual order of beauty and being old as creation, that gives to

[48] *Essays in the Romantic Poets*, p. 145.

form and images a breath and everlasting motion." Later, in his essay,[49] Professor Gingerich emphasizes another "seed thought," found in both *The Prelude* and "Intimations of Immortality":

> the poet glorifies the inward reality that takes its rise in childhood intuitions and bases his faith in man's greatness and immortality upon it. . . . . It was Wordsworth's dearest wish to prove beyond a doubt the continuity of our personal identity through all the vicissitudes of life, the reality of an inviolable inward nature that passeth understanding.

Even Tuckerman, in his brief article on Wordsworth in the *Southern Literary Messenger* for February, 1841,[50] expresses only a sentimental attitude toward the "Ode." He says it is the finest and most characteristic of Wordsworth's compositions. "The parent reading the poem," Tuckerman declares, "must derive a new sense of the sacredness of children, and learn to revere their innocence and leave unmarred their tender traits, and to yield them more confidently to the influence of nature."

Reed devotes considerable space in his seventy-page review[51] of Wordsworth's poems to the exposition of this poem. He does not even evade the "pre-existent state" which merely puzzled many readers and both puzzled and repelled others. Seeing into the real purpose of this poetic device, he sanely explains it as a means of bringing together the past and the future, and further states that "from the memory of our inmost being in

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 157. [50] VII, 105–9.

[51] *New York Review*, IV (1839), 1–70.

early life, there springs up an intimation of our immortality." The sixth and seventh stanzas of the poem call forth high praise from Reed: "We know of no mightier effort of poetic genius," declares the critic, "than the immortal endowment of the poet's spirit thus struggling with its earthly freight—custom, time, and domineering faculties of the sense, and we feel that the poet is victorious when he exultingly tells us,

> The thoughts of our past years doth breed
> Perpetual benediction. . . . .

Reed was influenced in his interpretation of the "Ode" and other of Wordsworth's poems about childhood by a strongly religious attitude. He maintains that the poet had this authority for regarding childhood as emblematic of a happy hereafter: "that Jesus bade his disciples suffer the little children to come unto him and proclaiming that 'of such is the kingdom of God'; took them up in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them." "The Saviour announces," continues Reed, "in one short sentence that 'of such [the little children] is the kingdom of heaven:' then it is a fit theme for uninspired wisdom to disclose what is the nature of the little child."

In addition to emphasis upon the religious element, which has just been noticed, we find in the magazines of the period, the appeal of the other characteristics of Wordsworth's poetry marked in the American annuals and early readers: namely, simplicity and the exultation of humble life and nature.

The critic writing an article on Wordsworth's poetry for the *North American Review,* 1824,[52] rejoices that Wordsworth found nothing in the mind and heart of man beneath his poetic notice. As an illustration of this idea, the writer quotes the following lines from "Peter Bell":

> Long have I loved what I behold,
> The night that calms, the day that cheers;
> The common growth of mother-earth
> Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
> Her humblest mirth and tears.
>
> The dragon's wing, the magic ring,
> I shall not covet for my dower,
> If I along that lowly way
> With sympathetic heart may stray,
> And with a soul of power.
>
> These given, what more need I desire
> To stir, to soothe, or elevate?
> What nobler marvels than the mind
> May in life's daily prospect find
> May find or there create?

In this same article the light of love which Wordsworth's poetry sheds over the manners and pursuits of the poor is compared to a setting sun which "pours its beams upon their cottages, gilding their torn thatch and ragged walls, and blending them with a landscape of peace and beauty." Into this background the writer places "The Old Cumberland Beggar" and "The Brothers"; the latter he considers "the most touching narrative of fraternal affection" he can remember. All of the

[52] XVIII, 356–71.

tender emotions aroused by such characters are associated with sentimental morality. Simplicity, humbleness, sentimental morality, walk hand in hand through such poems.

In harmony with the critic's sympathy for Wordsworth's simple subjects, follows his appreciation of the poet's use of plain and simple English, which is best adapted to the simple narrative poems. However, this critic also appreciates a quality often missed by these early critics; namely, sublimity of personification found in some of Wordsworth's poems. As an illustration of this quality the writer quotes:

THOUGHTS OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJUGATION OF SWITZERLAND

Two Voices are there; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains; each a mighty Voice;
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!
There came a tyrant, and with holy glee
Thou fought'st him; but hast vainly striven;
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length are driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
Of one deep bliss thy ear hath been bereft;
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left;
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be,
That Mountain floods should thunder as before
And Ocean bellow from rocky shore,
And neither awful voice be heard by thee.

The critic compares the last four lines of the sonnet to the "slow and solemn notes of Luther's *Judgment Hymn.*"

The greatest appeal to this writer, however, is de-

rived rather from "the intimate converse" which much of Wordsworth's poetry "holds with nature—from the revelations of "these secret influences which we have always felt but not understood—revelations which make us conscious of the fact that there is a mind and soul wherever we look." The reviewer quoted four stanzas of "Lines Written in Early Spring," as an expression of Wordsworth's belief that all material things have feeling:

> To her fair works did Nature link
> The human soul that through me ran;
> And much it grieved my heart to think
> What man has made of man.
>
> Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
> The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
> And 'tis my faith that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes.
>
> The birds around me hopped and played;
> Their thoughts I cannot measure;
> But the least motion which they made,
> It seemed a thrill of pleasure.
>
> The budding twigs spread out their fan,
> To catch the breezy air;
> And I must think, do all I can
> That there was pleasure there.

That nature was alive—had feeling—possessed a soul—was a revolutionary thought. It was an interpretation of Wordsworth's spirit of nature which many early readers failed to make, or, if they did grasp the idea, were incapable of appreciating it. That this critic

appreciated this "soul idea" is shown by his choosing the above poem and also "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower" to illustrate the principle. It is curious that this critic quotes no extracts from "Tintern Abbey," a poem which more than any other portrays the formative power of nature upon the soul. This omission he attributes not to a lack of appreciation of this revolutionary poem but to the knowledge that any discussion of his favorite verses would mean an exhaustive review and analysis for which there was no space in the limits of his article.

In his article in the *New York Review*,[53] 1839, Henry Reed takes a more profound view of Wordsworth's nature poetry. He quotes many lines from *The Excursion* to show that Wordsworth keeps the material world "in due subordination to the immortal power in the heart." Reed quotes the "sublime apostrophe to the Deity," in the fourth book of *The Excursion* which "proclaims that though the universe be perishable, there may be an undying communion between God and the soul of man."[54]

The appeal which the indomitable mind of man made to Reed is illustrated by his quotation from the description of the deaf man, which we have noted quoted in various places, and of the blind man.[55] "The description of the blind man, enlightened by his other senses, and by the spiritual illumination within, is moralized," Reed rightly thinks, "in a higher strain" than the

[53] IV (1839), 1–70. [54] Ll. 79–122.

[55] *The Excursion,* Book VII, ll. 518–36.

description of the deaf man, "rising into an imagination of the Christian victory over the grave, and closing with one of Wordsworth's favorite tributes to the congenial mind of Milton:

> . . . . proof abounds
> Upon the earth, that faculties which seem
> Extinguished, do not, therefore, cease to be.
> And to the mind among her powers of sense
> This transfer is permitted,—not alone
> That the bereft their recompense may win;
> But for remoter purposes of love,
> And charity; nor last nor least for this
> That to the imagination may be given
> A type and shadow of an awful truth;
> How, likewise, under sufferance divine,
> Darkness is banished from the realms of death,
> *By man's imperishable spirit quelled.*[55a]
> Unto the men who see not as we see
> Futurity was thought, in ancient times,
> To be laid open, and they prophesied.
> And know we not that from the blind have flowed
> The highest, holiest raptures of the lyre:
> And wisdom married to immortal verse?"

The indomitable mind and spiritual nature of Milton, continuously revealed in his broad, Puritanic life and sublime poetry, were qualities which won the admiration of Wordsworth. These characteristics, common both to Milton and Wordsworth, largely account for the frequency with which they are quoted in the early readers and magazines.

After reading Reed's long, thorough, and thoughtful

[55a] The italics are the author's.

criticism on Wordsworth and his poetry, we can well appreciate the statement that he, more than anyone else, was instrumental in promoting Wordsworth's early fortunes in America.

E. P. Whipple, who, we have noted in chapter i, was also a prominent American critic of the nineteenth century, has an interesting and thoughtful article on Wordsworth in the *North American Review* of 1844.[56] The same essay appears in Whipple's collection of *Essays and Reviews*.[57] Whipple, as well as the other critics whom we have noted, emphasizes the spiritual significance of Wordsworth's poems. Whipple bases Wordsworth's claim to originality and to the leadership of the poets of his time on these familiar lines in "Tintern Abbey":

> . . . . For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

[56] LIX, 352–84.

[57] I, 222–66.

Whipple emphasizes the fact that Wordsworth's originality lies in his "intense spiritualism mingled with the mildest and sweetest humanity." This, as he says, was a feeling which did not seem to have stirred the consciousness of Pope, of Gray, of Collins, of Goldsmith, of Burns, or of Cowper; and it is doubtful if it can be found in the great poems of the Elizabethan era. To some it may appear nothing more than the poetry of pantheism. To some it may seem utterly unintelligible. It was a greater stumbling-block in the way of the northern critics of Wordsworth than his alleged vulgarities and trivialities. But nothing is more certain than that it is this spirit which pervades the highest branches of imaginative literature. It is also this spirit, Whipple declared, which "affects the theological, the metaphysical and even the physical speculation of the day. The disposition to look beneath the forms to the spirit, not only of nature, but of institutions and faith, is the same in substance which is expressed in these celebrated lines of Wordsworth."

Whipple's discussion of the spiritual aspects of Wordsworth's poetry is more truly profound and far-reaching than any criticism of the period; in his analysis, he has found the "seed-thought" of "Tintern Abbey," which has passed out of the poem "to mingle with the interests of society."

To the popular mind accepting Wordsworth, he was the nature poet; the Christian poet; the poet of humble life; such a question as Wordsworth the philosopher did not disturb the casual reader. However, it is one which

has busied critics from the first quarter of the nineteenth century down to the present day and one which has called forth diverse opinions. Among the early critics who thoughtfully considered this phase of the poet, as he had weighed other aspects, was Whipple. In his essay on Wordsworth, Whipple declared that the poet's statements were too inconsistent for those of a philosopher. Wordsworth, explained Whipple, brings into his system the Platonic doctrine of pre-existence, pantheism, and the acknowledgment of a Supreme Being; these doctrines are stated poetically and cannot be harmonized by a process of reasoning. The habit of Wordsworth to meditate intensely, Whipple thought, had given the poet the reputation of a reasoner. "If *The Excursion,*" he said, "were stripped of its radiant dress of imagination and reduced to a plain prose treatise on ethics and metaphysics, it would be acknowledged to contain many common and important and subtile truths; but to present on the whole quite an unphilosophical blending of assertion and deduction, resulting in inharmonious and contradictory theories. It is as a poet rather than a philosopher that he is to be considered," states Whipple, "for, when he deals with themes of philosophy, he pursues the poetic method."

The last American magazine criticism which I found before Wordsworth's death in 1850, is a note in the *Literary World* of 1848,[58] which followed the announcement of an edition of Wordsworth's poems. The poems, which were selected by H. T. Tuckerman, were

[58] III, 896–97.

spoken of as "the favorite, oftenest thumbed poems of the author, those which the lovers of poetry wanted, put up in a size small enough to be carried around in the pocket." It is interesting to note the favorites of the lovers of poetry. The list includes the most striking of the *Sonnets,* "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," "the pure classic spiritual *Laodamia,*" "The Ode to Duty," the "White Doe of Rylstone," the "Russian Fugitive," the fourth book of *The Excursion,* "Peter Bell," the "Idiot Boy," the ballad "Ruth" and the most frequently read of the minor poems. "The following sonnet, less known than some of the others," remarked the critic, "is very beautiful and opens an inviting path to the imagination:

> With Ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh,
> Like stars in heaven, and joyously it showed:
> Some lying fast at anchor in the road,
> Some veering up and down, one knew not why.
> A goodly vessel did I then espy
> Come like a giant from a haven broad;
> And lustily along the bay she strode,
> Her tackling rich and of apparel high.
>
> This Ship was naught to me, nor I to her,
> Yet I pursued her with a lover's look;
> This Ship to all the rest did I prefer:
> When will she turn and whither? She will brook
> No tarrying; where She comes the winds must stir:
> On went She, and due north her journey took!"

The fact that "Peter Bell" and the "Idiot Boy" are included in the list of well-thumbed favorites indicates

we have traveled a long way from the period of unpopularity.

III

While the editors of the American annuals, readers, and magazines of this period were paying their respects to Wordsworth, another group of writers, who might be considered the literary élite of America, were freely expressing their opinions of the much discussed English poet, in journal, notebook, letter, poem, and essay. With one exception, I include in this group only our early American poets. The exception is George Ticknor, one of the most cultivated Americans of the period, a man, who, according to Barrett Wendell,[59] "made a deeper impression on the intellectual life of Boston than almost anybody else" and whose opinions affected literary taste.

Ticknor was the first professor of modern languages in an American university, holding that chair in Harvard University from 1824 to 1835. His private library was "the largest and best selected on this side of the Atlantic,"[60] and he was the chief promoter of the Boston public library.

Ticknor, during his second trip to Europe, 1833–38, renewed his acquaintance with Wordsworth which he had made in earlier years. He was a frequent visitor in the poet's home, where he was always received with the greatest kindness. His journal for September 1, 2,

[59] *A Literary History of America*, p. 264.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 265.

and 3, 1835,[61] records daily visits with Wordsworth. Ticknor comments upon the political views of the poet as being gloomy, though not bitter. Ticknor writes,

> He holds strongly and fondly with an affectionate feeling of veneration, to the old and established institutions, usages, and peculiarities of his country, and he sees them all stricken by the progress of change. . . . . He was very curious, too, about our institutions in America, and their effect upon society and character, and made many shrewd as well as kind remarks about us; but is certainly not inclined to augur well of our destines, for he goes upon the broad principle that the mass of any people cannot be trusted with government.

Wordsworth showed Ticknor

> the scenery in the spirit of one bred among its beauties, with which his mind has been peculiarly nourished, and of which his poetry everywhere bears the impress. He talks about Burns, whose poetry he analyzed with great truth and acuteness, considering it as the fresh and idealized expression of the most beautiful of merely human feelings and affections, in the better parts of it, and in this view of unrivalled merit.

He described "*The Recluse,* his unpublished poem," and repeated, "in illustration of his opinions, passages from his own work in his peculiar sonorous recitative."

In 1837 Ticknor met Wordsworth a number of times in Italy, where the poet was traveling with Crabb Robinson, his *fidus Achates.*[62] In Ticknor's accounts in his journals of these cordial meetings, spent in recount-

[61] *Life of Ticknor,* prepared by George Hilliard, and wife and daughters of Ticknor (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1877), I, 432–34.

[62] *Ibid.,* II, 85, 86, 97, 98, 99.

ing to each other the usual interesting adventures which befall tourists in Italy, we get a glimpse of a Wordsworth not revealed to us by any other American writer. Here is a Wordsworth far removed from the world of "apostolic" daisies, "golden daffodils," "invisible" cuckoos, humble Simon Lees, grief-stricken Michaels, and broken-hearted Margarets; here is a Wordsworth poetically affected by the magnificent grandeur of St. Peter's; delighted with the "genuine gondolier music of the country," beginning with Tasso "chanted in a soft Venetian dialect," followed by the national airs, and concluded with snatches of operas. After a typical tourist day spent in viewing the pictures in the Doge's Palace and in watching the doves fed, Wordsworth, Ticknor, the *fidus Achates,* and other friends, would meet together and have "an excellent dish of talk."

The last meeting which Ticknor had with Wordsworth was on May 9, 1838,[63] at the home of the poet where the American visitor, as usual, was heartily welcomed "with real frank kindness, as an old friend." On this occasion, Ticknor, at the urgent request of Mrs. Wordsworth, asked the poet why he did not finish *The Excursion* or *The Recluse.* "She could not bear," she said, "to have him occupied constantly in writing sonnets and other trifles while this great work lay untouched." Wordsworth thus replied to Ticknor's question: "Why did not Gray finish the long poem he began on a similar subject? Because he had undertaken some-

[63] *Ibid.,* p. 167.

thing beyond his powers to accomplish. And that is my case."[64]

After spending two or three hours with Wordsworth "in this sort of talk, and recollection of our meetings," Ticknor took a "cheerful leave of him and Mrs. Wordsworth, feeling that (he) left true friends behind."

These records which we have in the letters of Ticknor of his visits with Wordsworth, give us a delightful picture of the poet's quiet enjoyment with his family and his friends. Those who thought that he was cold and unresponsive knew him but little. To his friends he revealed warmth of temperament, openness and sincerity of disposition, and graciousness of hospitality. Crabb Robinson, who had "learned the softer side of his nature—repeated with approval a remark of Rogers, that few men knew how Wordsworth loved his friends."[65] The friendly daily intercourse of Wordsworth and Ticknor, a prominent and influential man of letters in America, was undoubtedly also a means of promoting in this country an interest in the poet and his work.

[64] (*a*) Wordsworth evidently referred to Gray's poem, *On the Alliance of Education and Government*. In a letter to Thomas Wharton, written from Stoke, August 19, 1748, Gray writes: "I fill up with the beginning of a sort of essay. What name to give it I know not, but the subject is, the *Alliance of Education and Government*" (Duncan C. Tovey, *Letters of Thomas Gray,* I, 192).

b) Gray wrote only one hundred seven lines of the poem. "His friends, who were greatly pleased with such a didactic poem besought him again and again to complete it, his answer was, *he could not.*" (*Gray's Select Poems,* edited by W. J. Rolfe (New York: Harper Bros.), p. 135.

[65] George McLean Harper, *William Wordsworth,* II, 405.

Emerson and Lowell had more to say about Wordsworth than any other of our early American poets; yet it would seem all of them made more or less Wordsworthian comment. In 1829, Longfellow,[66] while in Germany, made in his notebook the following interesting comparison between Wordsworth and Byron: "Next to Byron there is no poet whose writings have had so much influence on the taste of the age as Wordsworth. Byron drove on through the upper air, till the thunder of his wheels died on the ear. Wordsworth drove to Parnassus by the lower road, got sometimes lost in bulrushes and lowland fogs, and was much molested by mosquito critics." Longfellow was young when he made this comment, only twenty-two, but he judged Wordsworth with good discrimination.

The criticisms of Wordsworth made by Poe in the 1830's are in quite a different key from any others of this period. In 1831, in a letter written to Mr. B——,[67] Poe called attention to Aristotle's statement that poetry was "the most philosophical of all writings—but it required a Wordsworth to pronounce it the most metaphysical. He seems to think," continued Poe, "that the end of poetry is, or should be, instruction—yet it is a truism that the end of existence is happiness." Poe further declared in this letter to his friend that he had "no faith" in Wordsworth. "That he had in youth the feelings of a poet I believe—for there are glimpses of ex-

[66] Samuel Longfellow, *Henry Wordsworth Longfellow*, I, 172.

[67] John Ingram, *Poe, Edgar Allan—His Life, Letters and Opinions*, I, 94–102.

treme delicacy in his writings—but they have the appearance of a better day recollected; and glimpses, at best, are little evidence of present poetic fire—we know that a few straggling flowers spring up daily in the crevices of a glacier."

Poe condemns Wordsworth for his disapproval of the profuse imagery in Ossian's epic poem, *Temora,* beginning: "The blue waves of Erin roll in light. The mountains are covered with the day. Trees shape their dusky heads in the breeze." "And this—" continued Poe, "this gorgeous yet simple imagery where all is alive and panting with immortality—this, William Wordsworth, the author of "Peter Bell," has *selected* for contempt. We shall see what better . . . . he has to offer.

"Imprimis:

> And now she's at the pony's tail,
> And now she's at the pony's head.
> On that side now, and now on this;
> And almost stifled with her bliss,
> A few sad tears does Betty shed.
> She pats the pony where or when
> She knows not, happy Betty Foy!
> Oh Johnny, never mind the Doctor.

"Secondly:

> The dew was falling fast, the . . . . stars began to blink;
> I heard a voice, it said, drink, pretty creature, drink;
> And looking o'er the hedge, before me I espied
> A snow-white mountain lamb, with a . . . . maiden at its side.
> No other sheep were near . . . . the lamb was all alone,
> And by a slender cord was . . . . tether'd to a stone."

"Now, we have no doubt," are Poe's comments on the lines quoted, "this is all true; we *will* believe it, indeed we will, Mr. Wordsworth. Is it sympathy for the sheep you wish to excite? I love a sheep from the bottom of my heart."

Had Poe any other object than ridicule he would have selected other lines than those quoted to contrast Wordsworth with Ossian.

Poe next proceeded to quote an extract from Wordsworth's Preface:

> Those who have been accustomed to the phraseology of modern writers, if they succeed in reading this book to a conclusion, (impossible) will, no doubt, have to struggle with feelings of awkwardness; (ha! ha! ha!) they will look around for poetry (ha! ha! ha! ha!) and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts have been permitted to assume that title. (Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!)

These remarks of Poe are the only ones in this transition period in America holding Wordsworth up to ridicule. The man Poe was as diametrically opposed, in temperament, disposition, and environment to the man Wordsworth as his ideas in regard to the purpose and qualifications of poetry were opposed to those of Wordsworth's. We would expect Poe to have no sympathy for this English poet. In his letter to Mr. B—— Poe stated that he thought that the immediate object of a poem is pleasure not truth; that when he thought of poetry, he thought "of all that is airy and fairy-like." "With Poetry," Poe declared, "are associated indefinite sensations to which end music is essential." He had "for the

metaphysical poets as poets," he also brought out in his letter, "the most sovereign contempt." In his Preface to his poems, Poe declared that to him poetry had not been a purpose but a passion. Thus Poe in all respects was a direct antithesis to Wordsworth.

In contrast to the lack of sympathy between Wordsworth and Poe, indicated in the latter's letter to Mr. B——, Thoreau, in the comments in his *Journals* during the 1840's, shows an interested and sympathetic attitude toward Wordsworth. This is not unexpected for we know that Thoreau and Wordsworth had much in common. Both had an intense love for the great out-of-doors, the friendly sympathy of which was dearer to them than human society. Each wished to live simply and deliberately, that he might have the leisure to grow mentally and spiritually. Each had a keen sensuous perception of nature which endeared to him every sight and sound.

In the *Journal* for June 11, 1840,[68] Thoreau quotes these lines:

> In glory and in joy
> Behind his plough upon the mountainside.[69]

As he read these lines, Thoreau declared, he "seemed to see the woods wave on a hundred mountains; . . . . and the distant rustling of their leaves reached my

[68] I, 139.

[69] The lines should read:

> ". . . . who walked in glory and in joy
> Following his plough along the mountain-side."
>
> —"Resolution and Independence," stanza 7.

ears." Here we find Thoreau keenly awake to Wordsworth's vivid sense impressions.

Two years later, January 2, 1842,[70] Thoreau, in speaking of Chaucer, comments upon his "simple pathos and feminine gentleness which not even Wordsworth can match."

In the summer of 1842, July 10, in describing his walk to Wachusett,[71] Thoreau says: "We read Virgil and Wordsworth in our tent, with new pleasure there, while waiting for a clearer atmosphere, nor did the weather prevent our appreciating the simple truth and beauty of 'Peter Bell':

> And he had trudged through Yorkshire dales,
> Among the woods and winding scars,
> Where deep and low the hamlets lie
> Beneath their little patch of sky,
> And little lot of stars."

Thoreau follows this quotation from "Peter Bell" with the remark: "Who knows but this hill may some day be a Helvellyn, or even a Parnassus, and the Muses haunt here, and other Homers frequent the neighboring places?"

There are two records in Thoreau's *Journals,* including the years 1845–47, in which Wordsworth is mentioned. Thoreau speaks of the good old age to which Wordsworth has arrived, "such as the ancients reached, serene and contented, dignifying the life of man, leading a simple, epic country life in these days of confusion

[70] *Journals,* I, 310.

[71] *The Writings of Thoreau,* V, 143–44.

and turmoil—retaining the tastes and innocence of his Youth. There is more wonderful talent, but nothing so cheering and world-famous as this."[72] The serenity of Wordsworth is the quality which would especially appeal to Thoreau, as he believed it was only through serenity that one could obtain an insight into nature.

In the second reference to Wordsworth in these two years, Thoreau again refers to Wordsworth's talent. He speaks of it as feeble and of the poet's genius as being persevering rather than great. While this comment is slightly derogatory, Thoreau enjoyed and appreciated Wordsworth and found his poetry stimulating.

Most of Lowell's Wordsworth-criticism comes in the next period; we find, however, some references made by this American critic to Wordsworth in the transition period. In a letter written by Lowell from Elmwood, August 30, 1844, to a friend, Charles F. Briggs, who had recently suffered bereavement, Lowell offers the following consolation:

> In your present affliction, you have, according to my idea of poetry, the best right to pass judgment upon the merits of the poets. Those are, it seems to me, the great ones, who give us something to lean upon in our sorrow, and something yet to look forward to in our deepest joys and our amplest successes. Neither Byron nor Scott does this. Shakespeare does, so does Milton. In a less degree so do Chaucer, Spenser, and Wordsworth. So, I think, do Coleridge, Keats, and Tennyson. If they give us nothing else, they give us at least a feeling of great-heartedness and exaltation which, if it does not lay hold of the hem of God's mantle, at least

[72] I, 407–8.

'. . . . the extremest skirts of glory sees
And hears celestial echoes with delight!' "[73]

In this letter Lowell pays a high tribute to the deep spiritual quality of the verse of Wordsworth, which places him among "the great ones."

Lowell also makes reference to Wordsworth in his *Fable for Critics,* published in 1848. In this satirical piece Lowell passes his critical judgment upon his contemporaries. He states in his "Note to the Reader," which precedes the poem, that he "began it, intending a Fable . . . . with a sting in its tail." In the lines stinging Bryant, Lowell reveals his high estimation of Wordsworth:

Some scholar who's hourly expecting his learning
Calls B. the American Wordsworth; but Wordsworth
May be rated at more than your whole tuneful herd's worth.
No, don't be absurd, he's an excellent Bryant;
But my friends, you'll endanger the life of your client
By attempting to stretch him up into a giant.

. . . . . .

He's a Cowper condensed, with no craziness bitten,
And the advantage that Wordsworth before him had written.

Of the various entries concerning Wordsworth, made by our poets in their journals, notebooks, letters, poems, and essays, those in Emerson's journals probably lead in importance. Emerson has shown his interest in Wordsworth in many of the entries in his journals,[74] be-

[73] *Lowell Letters,* edited by Charles Eliot Norton, I, 79.

[74] See Professor John Brooks Moore, "Emerson on Wordsworth," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America,* Vol. XLI, No. 1 (March, 1926).

ginning in 1826, when the American writer was twenty-three, and extending down through the year 1868. It is interesting to follow in these free expressions, Emerson's attitude toward Wordsworth, which begin with youthful explosion of a hostile nature, undergo a favorable change as the years advance, and finally, when Emerson attains a mature judgment, culminate in a boundless faith in and admiration of Wordsworth.

June 30, 1826, the American poet, writing to his aunt, Miss Emerson, remarked:

> Mr. Wordsworth failed in pleasing by being too much of a *poet*. . . . . I can't read this poet's mystic and unmeaning verses without feeling that if he had cultivated poetry less and learning and society more, he could have gained more favour at the hands of the muses, who must be courted, not be taken by violence. 'Tis sufficient proof of a man's aberration to know that he is writing verses on a theory; that he has agreed with two or three antics more to bring the public over to a new taste in poetry. . . . .
>
> He can't be satisfied with feeling the general beauty of a moonlight or of a rose. He would pick them to pieces and pounce on the pleasurable element he is sure is in them, like a little boy who cut open his drum to see what made the noise. The worthy gentleman gloats over a bulrush, moralizes on the irregularity of one of its fibres, and suspects a connection between an excrescence of the plant and its own immortality.[75]

After the young Emerson had thus exploded, he added, "he has occasionally written lines which I think truly noble."

The source of the early irritability of Emerson seems to be due to the fact that he, like the various magazine critics whom we have noted, thought Words-

[75] Emerson, *Journals*, II, 106–9.

worth went to an extreme in building up his poetry on a theory which he was determined would "create a new taste in poetry." While Emerson is not yet ready to join any of the magazine critics in their choral hymn in praise of Wordsworth, we can see he was interested in him, was reading his poetry, and doing considerable thinking concerning it.

The next entry in the journal, in which Emerson speaks of Wordsworth, is dated 1828:

> A fault that strikes the readers of Mr. Wordsworth is the direct pragmatical analysis of objects, in their nature poetic, but which all other poets touch incidentally. He mauls the moon, and the waters, and the bulrushes, as his main business. . . . . Mr. Wordsworth is trying to distil the essence of poetry from poetic things instead of being satisfied to adorn common scenes with such lights from these sources of poetry as nature will always furnish to her true lovers.[76]

Emerson has not yet learned to get beneath Wordsworth's so-called "common themes" so as to appreciate their uncommoness.

Emerson has more to say of Wordsworth in the 1830's than in any other year. His appreciation of Wordsworth's genius has advanced since the comment in his journal in 1828. Writing in October, 1831, Emerson, speaking of Wordsworth, declared: "He has written lines that are like outward nature, so fresh, so simple, so durable; but whether all or half of his texture is as firm, I doubt, though last evening [27 October] I read with delight his *Sonnets to Liberty*."[77]

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 232.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 402.

The next month of the same year he wrote: " . . . . read Wordsworth—'River Duddon'; 'Ode to Duty'; 'Rob Roy'; excellent, happier diction than ordinary. 'The Poet's Epitaph,' fine account of the poet."[78] There is one dissenting note in this entry and that is an objection to the last verse in the "Poet's Epitaph," which Emerson calls miserable. He speaks of "Dion" as being sublime and the "Happy Warrior" as excellent. Emerson praises Wordsworth for seeking the truth and shunning "with brave self-denial every image that is from the purpose, means to stick close to his own thought and give it in naked simplicity and so make it God's affair, not his own whether it shall succeed." Then follows another dissenting note: "But he fails of executing this purpose fifty times for the sorry purpose of making a rhyme in which he has no skill, or from imbecility of mind, losing sight of his thought, or from self-surrender to custom in diction." This entry closes with Emerson's comment that "every moral line in his book might be framed like a picture, or graven on a temple porch and would gain instead of losing by being pondered." The moral and meditative quality of Wordsworth's verse would naturally appeal to Emerson for both poets were meditative writers—teachers uttering uplifting thought through literature.

Emerson's visit to Wordsworth in 1833 is described in *English Traits*[79] almost exactly as it appears in his journal for August 28, 1833. The impression which this

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 429–30. [79] Pp. 21–27.

single conversation with Wordsworth made upon Emerson during his visit is quite the reverse of that produced upon Ticknor in his numerous talks with the poet. Wordsworth's objection to the spread of education in England and America—to reform in education necessitated by economic and social changes—caused Emerson to cast upon the poet the opprobriums of "narrowness," "general tameness," "conformity."

In 1835[80] Emerson, for a while at least, is in perfect accord with Wordsworth. The comfort, he writes, he has in taking up the poems of Wordsworth consists in his finding "thoughts in harmony with the great frame of nature, placid aspect of the universe. . . . . I may find dullness and flatness, but I shall not find meanness and error."

In this year we find two other notations concerning Wordsworth in the journals of Emerson. In one[81] he speaks of the verses of Wordsworth as those of "a great and original bard" but thinks he writes ill. In the last entry of the year,[82] the platitudes of Wordsworth seem to worry him, and thus he writes:

> I poet bestow my verse
> On this and this and this.

"Scarce has he dropped the smallest piece of an egg, when he fills the barnyard with his cackle." Here Emerson echoes the criticism of some of the early magazine critics to the effect that Wordsworth considered everything worthy of recording in verse. Thus we note that by

[80] *Journals*, III, 560. [81] *Journals*, III, 535. [82] *Ibid.*, p. 561.

1835 Emerson, in his study of Wordsworth, has arrived at a high admiration of much of his poetry but is not entirely won over to him.

In 1837,[83] Emerson gives Wordsworth another half-compliment, when he writes that Wordsworth is "garrulous and weak but quite free from cant."

But by February 17, 1838,[84] he is praising Wordsworth for his self-reliance in writing "a true description of anything; for example, Wordsworth's picture of skating; that leaning back on your heels and stopping in mid-career. So simple a fact no common man would have trusted himself to detach as a thought."

We noted in chapter ii the prominence of this quality of self-reliance in the work of both Emerson and Wordsworth. It is this quality in Wordsworth's poetry which, as Professor John B. Moore says in his essay, *Emerson on Wordsworth*,[85] "won upon Emerson steadily." It is this spiritual quality of self-reliance, this faith in the dominant mind, which, more than any other quality, heralds Emerson as the American Wordsworth.

In 1840 Emerson wrote: "Wordsworth has done as much as any living man to restore sanity to society."[86] Emerson infers in this remark that the so-called "cultivated society" had at last removed their objections to Wordsworth's humble themes and had come to realize

[83] *Ibid.*, IV, 398.

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol. XLI, No. 1 (March, 1926).

[86] *Journals*, V, 393.

that there is much in lowly life worthy of elevation into the poetic realm.

In 1842 Emerson wrote: "If in this last book of Wordsworth's, there be dullness, it is yet the dullness of a great and cultivated mind."[87] Professor Moore points out that this is the "only even slightly derogatory note of the latter days."

The *Dial*,[88] "a magazine for Literature, Philosophy, and Religion," which was issued from July, 1840, to April, 1844, also contains some interesting comments of Emerson on Wordsworth. An article entitled "Thoughts on Modern Literature,"[89] written by Emerson, states: "*The Excursion* awakened in every lover of nature the right feeling. We saw stars shine, we felt the awe of mountains; we heard the rustle of the wind in the grass, and knew again the ineffable secret of solitude. It was a great joy. It was nearer to nature than anything we had before."

In the ninth number of the *Dial*,[90] which appeared in July, 1842, Emerson showed a more generous attitude toward Wordsworth's "Sonnets on Punishment of Death" than that taken by the critic in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, which we have noted. At this time Emerson was looking with much favor upon a new volume of Wordsworth's poems just arrived from London. "We have read them all with great content," Emerson writes, "and very willingly forgave the

[87] *Ibid.*, VI, 264.

[88] Reprinted in numbers for the Rowfant Club with a supplementary volume prepared by George Willis Cooke (Cleveland, 1901–2).

[89] II, 150. [90] P. 135.

poet for writing against the abolition of capital punishment for the sake of the self-respect and truth of his own character which the topic and the treatment evinced." Here again we notice the appeal which Wordsworth's independence of mind made upon the American writer.

The interest of Emerson in Wordsworth, which the entries in his *Journals* and comments in the *Dial* show, his reading, studying, and meditative thinking of the poet is extremely significant. In addition to his keen, sensuous appreciation of Nature, which all of the New England poets held in common with Wordsworth, Emerson, as we have noted, most nearly possessed something like the indomitable mind of Wordsworth, and, too, was endowed with Wordsworth's mystical insight into Nature, which is lacking to any great extent in the poetry of the other American writers. Emerson and Wordsworth are both lovers of Nature "whose inward and outward sense are adjusted to each other."[91]

The opinions of our poets concerning Wordsworth would have more weight with the cultivated minds of America than those of other critics. They were able to look at his work with discriminating literary judgment, unless this judgment was blinded by an antagonistic attitude toward the style and purpose of Wordsworth's poetry, as was the case with Poe. Poe was not in harmony with the aesthetic tradition of American literature, as were our other poets. These comments of our poets taken largely from their private journals, notebooks, and letters, are stamped with a freedom, sincerity, and indi-

[91] Emerson's essay, *Idealism*.

viduality of expression which create in the reader special confidence and interest. Thus we can readily see that the appreciative attitude of our poets toward Wordsworth would be effective in promoting his work in America.

The material presented in this chapter proves that by 1824 the narrow-souled censure and ridicule of the critics in the early part of the century had ceased. Wordsworth had emerged from a period of neglect and indifference in America. The small number of his admirers in this country, who from the beginning had been full of enthusiasm over his revolt from the artificial and conventional poetry which had satisfied the majority, had grown into a goodly company of appreciative readers. Time and culture had brought about more discrimination on the part of the critics. During this period, 1824–50, we have seen that Wordsworth was appealing to the most cultivated minds in America. Our most able periodical critics and our poets were much interested in him; they were studying his poetry and showing an attitude of appreciative reaction toward the poet which was reflected in the reviews, the journals, the letters, and the poetry of the time. That this appreciation reached a culmination in the next ten years will be shown in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE PERIOD OF FULL APPRECIATION

I

The date 1824, as noted in chapter iv, was a crucial one, for it marked a change in America's attitude toward Wordsworth. Eighteen-fifty was another outstanding year, for within it occurred an event of deep interest to literary lovers on both sides of the Atlantic. In that year William Wordsworth died. Since he had reached the age of eighty years, his death was not unexpected; yet, when the news of the departure of one who had become the favorite of many lovers of poetry in America reached this country, they felt, as an anonymous critic calling himself "A. M." expressed in an article in the *Southern Literary Messenger*,[1] that they "had lost a dear friend, or rather a revered parent, whose being taken away is our loss but his gain."

The death of the poet called forth from American magazines many reminiscences of Wordsworth, detailed reviews of his life, and a manifestation on the part of the public of a deepened interest in his writings. This interest was further indicated by the fact that in 1850–51 more editions of Wordsworth's works were published than in any two years previous to 1850. Space does not permit me to note all of the eulogies appearing in American magazines during these years, but enough will be

[1] XVI (August, 1850), 474.

given to show the place which Wordsworth had won in the hearts of American literary circles.

According to the editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger,*[2] Wordsworth had struggled through "years of neglect and indifference from the public which had since done all but worship him." He had a "heart to sympathize with nature in all her moods, an intellect expanded, acute, and vigorous to interpret in noble words his noble feelings of the heart." In discussing various poems, the editor designated *The Excursion* as a "noble work in point of thought and matter, with diction which is tense, meditative, dramatic, embracing all the moods of the language moulded by a master's hand."[3] The *Lyrical Ballads,* however, "are the favorites of the great mass of readers," according to this critic. He spoke of "Lucy Gray" and the "Waterfall and the Eglantine" as "types of these productions, which linger in the heart like some long-treasured memory of happy childhood. The power to write these lyrics says all that needs to be said about Wordsworth's heart and mind."

In *Harper's Magazine,* for October, 1850,[4] there appears a reprint of an article from the *Eclectic,* in which Wordsworth's poems are spoken of as "possessing a moral clearness, beauty, transparency and harmony which connect them with those of Milton and beside the

[2] XVI (July, 1850), 453.

[3] "*The Excursion:*—a poem of more exquisite simplicity and purity of style than any approaching the same length since *Paradise Lost* was written," *Southern Quarterly Review,* XVIII (1850), 11.

[4] I, 581.

more popular poets of the past, such as Byron's and Moore's they remind us of that unplanted garden, where the shadow of God united all trees of fruitfulness and all flowers of beauty into one."

A writer in the *Southern Quarterly Review* for September, 1850,[5] declared: "There may arise men of equal intellectual power, or with as keen a perception of the beautiful in nature, or of what is graceful in art or sublime in humanity. . . . . But . . . . we can have little hope to expect to find one in whom these high qualities were more remarkably blended than in William Wordsworth."

In the *Literary World,* June 15, 1850,[6] Henry Reed quoted from the *London Examine*r a high tribute to Wordsworth, which, Reed stated, expressed the attitude of the American people.

> Rarely has a human life closed on purposes so fully accomplished as that of the Poet. . . . . There are a few yet surviving, whom the extinction of Wordsworth's mortal life effects with a nearer interest. They will feel in it a portion of their own. They are those who first became acquainted with his poetry when it was scoffed at by the critics and neglected by the world, who felt it then the current of their life, and tempering the pulses of their intellectual being, to whom it opened new sympathies with the external world, with which strangers could not interfere; who devoted themselves to its defence with the fiery earnestness of sectaries; who watched with trembling pleasure and pride its steady progress, and who felt its victories as their own personal success.

Reed, in commenting upon the foregoing, said that this feeling "is shared on this side of the Atlantic and

[5] XVIII, 23. [6] O.S., VI, 581.

the Poet's death has here brought to the heart of many a thoughtful reader of his poetry a more solemn recognition of moral and intellectual gratitude. Never to poet has such tribute (more precious a thousand-fold than the formal praise of criticism!) been rendered with more earnest affection." One of the proofs of Wordsworth's influence in the first half of the nineteenth century, Reed said,

may be found in a zealous admiration which wears rather the guise of grateful and affectionate attachment to a wise and bounteous benefactor. The affectionate gratitude which has so eminently been the tribute paid to Wordsworth's genius was ever one of the chief objects of his own ambition. The last line of the "Valedictory Sonnet" was, "Grant me thy love, I crave no other fee."

Reed quoted from a letter he had received from Wordsworth in 1837: "The acknowledgments I receive from the vast continent of America are among the most grateful that reach me."[7] Reed emphasized the completeness of Wordsworth's career:

When we think of his four score years of irreproachable life, devoted to the noblest and best purposes of his art . . . . when we recall how much he has achieved, and how many of the foremost spirits of the age . . . . have rejoiced in proclaiming the Poet's power over them, we feel as if sorrow were unsuited to the tranquil close of such a life . . . . that we should ask no dirge, but rather borrow one of his own elegiac strains—

> "A garland of immortal boughs
> To twine around the Christian's brows,
> Whose glorious work is done."[8]

[7] *Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, III, 140.

[8] "Elegiac Stanzas." Address to G. H. B. upon the death of his sister-in-law.

The lofty praise of Wordsworth continued through the 1850's. His poems were referred to as "heavenward-striving spires,"[9] and he was spoken of as "the greatest English Poet since Milton;[10] one who has done more than any living man for the improvement of the principles and feelings of the educated classes in England;[11] whose "name is a word of benediction to all who have felt the influence of his kindly spirit."[12]

One of the most rhapsodic reminiscences of the period is that reported by "A. M.,"[13] who had visited Rydal Mount the year before Wordsworth's death. Contrary to the reports of some visitors, the impression made by Wordsworth upon "A. M." was not one of egotism, of the disposition to talk only of himself, of boring by monotonous repeating of his own verses,[14] of quoting bits of praise of himself, of entire oblivion to

[9] *North American Review,* LXXIII (October, 1851), 477.

[10] *Ibid.,* p. 474.

[11] *New Englander,* IX (1851), 615.

[12] *American Review,* XIV (July, 1851), 68.

[13] *Southern Literary Messenger,* XVI (August, 1850), 474–79.

[14] Henry Crabb Robinson wrote in his diary, January 31, 1836: "It occurs to me that I have not noticed as I ought Wordsworth's answer to the charge that he never quotes other poems than his own. In fact I can testify to the incorrectness of the statement. But he himself remarked: 'You know I love and quote not only Shakespeare and Milton but Cowper, Burns, etc.; as to some of the later poets, I do not quote them because I do not love them. Even as works of mere taste there is this material circumstance—they came too late. My taste was formed, for I was forty-five when they appeared; we cannot after that age love new things. Had I been young, I should have enjoyed much of them I do not doubt'" (*Diary and Correspondence,* I, 223–24).

matters which were of interest to his visitor. "A. M." writes:

> Have you never, dear reader, been privileged to sit at the feet of one who was as pure and good as he was wise and learned; one whose grace of manner was as irresistible as his affectionate interest in yourself was soothing and inspiring; one who threw a charm over every topic, breathed life into every subject, gave dignity to every question?—Wordsworth was such a one as this—purity, wisdom and goodness characterized his social and domestic intercourse.

The criticisms of 1850 and 1851, following immediately the death of Wordsworth and partaking somewhat of the nature of obituary notices, are naturally exaggerated and characterized by much gushing subjectivity.

In the conversation with "A. M.," Wordsworth showed his usual interest in American affairs. He inquired concerning the progress of the Protestant Episcopal Church or, as he called it, the "English Church in America." "A. M." gave him "very full and accurate information on the state of religion generally in the United States." Wordsworth expressed his disapproval of some of our social, civil, and political policies and spoke strongly against slavery. When "A. M." presented his reasons for America's belief "in equality of political rights and our dislike of nobility, royal state, and legally established differences between man and man, he candidly confessed these were matters well worthy of his further consideration." He avowed his deep interest in America's welfare and expressed his ardent wish "to see both countries united more and more strongly in the

bonds of brotherhood and his conviction of the transcendent greatness of our beloved countries in the future." Wordsworth spoke most kindly of "his brother bards across the Atlantic," whom he knew to some extent. He had read some of the productions of Longfellow and admired him very much. Bryant's poems appealed especially to him; he considered them "more striking and more full of America than anything he had seen." Bryant's descriptions of American scenery had made a deep impression upon Wordsworth. He had seen Mrs. Sigourney and had read several of her pieces, of which he spoke kindly, as characterized by "sweetness and melody but as not to be ranked with the higher efforts of genius. . . . . Such names as Irving, Prescott, Marshall, Kent, Story, and many others were treasured up by him with affectionate interest."

In 1852 occurred an event which further united the Wordsworth-admirers in America and England. The literary circles of America combined with those of England in showing their appreciation of Wordsworth by contributing to a memorial to the poet to be placed in a church at Ambleside.[15] It was fitting that Henry Reed,[16] who had been a staunch admirer and friend of Wordsworth should have charge of the movement in America.

[15] Amount raised in America, $700.00 (*Transactions of the Wordsworth Society*, No. 5, p. 88).

[16] Professor Reed's "notes on the Poet's writings evince an intelligent and general appreciation of the author and tend to cultivate the like quality in others" (*North American Review*, LXXIII [October, 1851], 494–95).

In the address which Reed issued in connection with the enterprise, he said:

In the United States the true inspiration of the poetry of Wordsworth and its moral as well as its imaginative influences, were early recognized, perhaps as soon as in Great Britain. These influences spreading far and wide have entered into many an American mind, producing there in an eminent degree, those sentiments of personal affection, reverence, and gratitude to the poet, which have ever been noted as particularly the accompaniment of the studious admiration of his writings. The vast spaces of our continent, with English speech sounding over it, when contemplated by Wordsworth from a distance helped to deepen that sense of responsibility with which during his long life he devoted the genius with which he was gifted, to the service of God and to the good of his fellowmen. And when American travellers, strangers though they might be, visited his home, they were received not as foreigners, but with the hospitable and friendly welcome given to his countrymen.[17]

The letters[18] sent to Reed in answer to his suggestion that contributions would be welcome, are interesting:

Ticknor, who was a personal friend of Wordsworth wrote: "I shall be very glad to contribute towards the memorial of Wordsworth, as an expression of my gratitude for what I owe to him as a great moral poet, whose influence on me and mine has been most beneficent."

From *Bancroft:* "He is as much read on this side of the water as on the other; and I believe that he looked to this country as the guardian of his memory as much as to his own."

Woolsey, president of Yale College: "It will give me great pleasure to unite in honoring the memory of one whom I loved so much and from whom I derived so much good as Wordsworth."

[17] *Literary World,* O.S., XII (1853), 512–13.

[18] *Ibid.*

Mrs. Sigourney: "I count it as a privilege to unite in this tribute not only from deep admiration of the poet, but from the memory of courteous attention while a traveller among the Lakes in his vicinity."

Longfellow: "I will join you with heart and hand in the proposed memorial of Wordsworth; with my heart in ardent desire to do him honor, with my hand to such an amount as I can, saying with Dante, *Onorata l'altissimo poeta!*"

In the note which Emerson sent accompanying his contribution to Reed, he spoke of Wordsworth as being the "solitariest and wisest of poets." He said, too, that Wordsworth was the only man among his countrymen "who has not in any point succumbed to their ways of thinking and has prevailed. I mean consciously submitted; for his Church and State, though genuine enough in him, I look upon as the limitations and not the excellence of his genius."[19]

The contribution and the letters showed the appreciative attitude of literary America toward Wordsworth, the kind remembrance in which he was held in this country, and were a significant acknowledgment of his influence in America.

In 1855,[20] an anonymous writer, Cecilia, gave a lengthy review of Wordsworth's portraiture of women. She called attention to the fact that Wordsworth has said more beautiful things of woman than any other of the

[19] Emerson to Reed from New York: "I shall send this note reserving my right to communicate a more considered billet, as soon as I find a quiet half-hour to rejoice in my remembrance of this old-time benefactor" (*Transactions of the Wordsworth Society,* No. 5, p. 124).

[20] *Southern Literary Messenger,* XXI, 686–88.

"gifted sons of genius." She referred to his frequent and affectionate allusions to his sister and quoted stanzas from "She was a Phantom of Delight," in which Wordsworth pictures his ideal woman, and from the Lucy Poems, in which the poet refers "to an early love, we know not whether of the imagination or the heart." The story of Ruth "fills our hearts with tenderness and love." The suffering woman "is pictured in 'Laodamia,'" the "saintly woman in the 'White Doe of Rylstone,'" and Margaret of the *Excursion* is described as

> . . . . a woman of steady mind
> Tender and deep in her excess of love.

Then "Cecilia" turned from the suffering women to Wordsworth's "poetic creations of brightness and gaiety in, "To a Highland Girl" and the "Solitary Reaper." Wordsworth's women "breathe the free air of heaven and both body and soul are moulded by the influence of the outer world."

In the *United States Democratic Review*,[21] a year later, appeared two extensive essays on Wordsworth, one in the April number, running for fourteen pages, and the continuation in the May number for thirteen pages. In these twenty-seven pages, no faults of Wordsworth were mentioned. By various quotations the writer showed that Wordsworth's poems "differ from one another as different flowers in the same garden." First were quoted seven stanzas from "Laodamia," which the critic placed on top of "Parnassus." "It was found one

[21] (*a*) VI (1856), 281–95. (*b*) *Ibid.*, pp. 363–76.

day about noon," he poetically stated, "in a beautiful little evergreen on its very summit." Along by the side of it was placed a poem of an entirely different character, with "its bits of sunshine and patches of shade," the "Thorn." . . . . After quoting the entire poem, the critic asked, "Where are you now, O wonderful wise-acres, who have been prating about Wordsworth's lack of sympathy with men and life?" Four stanzas of "Peter Bell" were quoted, and the suggestion was given to those who objected to the poem that if they would go out some bright morning in June "and catch a portion of the happy influences that are breathed above and around you, perhaps some of it may fall inwardly in your heart, and open your eyes to see and your hearts to understand what is that 'soul of happy sound' which lies spread in such an hour over water and earth and air." Extracts of many other poems were given which were formerly received with expressions of "This will never do" that have now "passed into memorials and will live and grow greener through coming years."

The criticisms of 1855 and 1856 partake of the same gushing subjectivity as the so-called "obituary notices" we noted immediately following the death of Wordsworth. They are written with enthusiasm but lack discriminating literary insight.

While by far the greater part of the criticism of Wordsworth in the period 1850–60 is favorable, we still find some conscientious objectors.

In *Harper's Magazine* of 1850[22] occurs an interest-

[22] II, 201.

ing comparison between *The Prelude*[23] and *Sartor Resartus*. The critic compares *The Prelude* "to a large fossil relic, imperfect and magnificent, newly dug up and with the fresh earth and old dim sub-soil meeting and mingling around it." He draws the following contrast between Sartor and Wordsworth:

> Sartor cannot amid a universe of work find a task fit for him to do and yet can much less be idle; while to Wordsworth basking in the sun, or loitering near an evening stream, is sufficient and satisfactory work. To Sartor, Nature is a divine tormentor; her work at once inspires and agonizes him; Wordsworth loves her with the passion of a perpetual honeymoon. . . . . Sartor is a brother man in fury and fever; Wordsworth seems a cherub almost chillingly pure.

The last statement from *Harper's* is a kind of anticipation of such criticism as that of Babbitt in his *Rousseau and Romanticism:*

> Wordsworth lauds in true Rousseauistic fashion a "wise passiveness." But to be truly contemplative is not to be passive at all,

[23] (*a*) "The style is simple but elegant, often flowing along in a quiet, philosophic strain, but rising ever and anon into glowing eloquence; the reader's admiration is constantly excited by felicitous expression or elevated sentiment. The address to the powers of nature in the twelfth book is a fine specimen of the general ease and beauty of the style: 'Ye motions of delight that haunt the sides

Of the green hills . . . . (ll. 9–31)'" (*North American Review,* LXXIII [1851], 485).

(*b*) The *Southern Quarterly Review* of November, 1850, speaks of *The Prelude,* the "last and admirable effort of his genius," as being "quite worthy of his muse and absolutely essential to the history of his progress and career. It is full of passages marked by his earnest sweetness, the grave delicacy of his mood, his habit of musing contemplation, the rare, philosophical simplicity which make the analysis of his mind and writings so interesting" (XVIII, 540).

but to be "energetic" in Aristotle's sense, or strenuous in Buddha's sense. . . . . For there can be no doubt that the energy in which the doctrine of Aristotle culminates is the same as the "strenuousness" on which Buddha puts his final emphasis. The highest good they both agree is contemplative working. It is by thus working according to the human law that one rises above the naturalistic level.[24]

The critic who makes the comparison between Wordsworth and Sartor also draws one between Milton and Wordsworth to the disadvantage of the latter:

Both were proud in spirit, pure in life, self-conscious; both essayed the loftiest things in poetry; both combined intellect with imagination in equal proportions; both were persevering and elaborate artists. Neither possessed a particle of humor. Milton was a scholar. Wordsworth was no more than respectable in point of learning. Milton may be called a glorious book-worm; Wordsworth an insect feeding on trees. . . . . Wordsworth has produced many sublime lines, but no character approaching the sublime. Milton has reared up Satan to the world, the most magnificent structure in the intellectual world. Wordsworth's sonnets are perhaps equal to Milton's; some of his minor poems may approach "Lycidas" and "Il Penseroso" but where a whole like *Paradise Lost?*

This criticism is clearly unsympathetic with "Nature" poetry.

The main part of an article which appeared in the *Southern Quarterly Review* of September, 1850,[25] had been written before the news of the death of Wordsworth had been received in this country. The critic, considering the poet's literary labors finished, had planned to make a complete review of the work of Wordsworth;

[24] Irving Babbitt, p. 343. [25] XVIII, 1–24.

and, in spite of his death, he carried out his original intentions. In this review, we again meet concern with Wordsworth's diction. The critic asked, "How are we to reconcile the following passages with Wordsworth's disposition not to personify natural objects more than prose admits of":

> Peopling the *harmless fields* with signs of woe,
> Beneath her sway a simple *forest cry*
> Becomes an echo of man's misery.[26]

And again:

> *Blithe ravens* croak of death.[27]

The reviewer thought the following description of the lark had little to do with the language of prose:

> But he is risen, a later star of dawn,
> Glittering and twinkling yon rosy cloud.
> *Bright gem, instinct with music, vocal spark*
> The happiest bird that sprang out of the ark.[28]

The first three lines, he said, are as "poetic as Gray himself could have desired," while the last line contains "quite too much prose." The critic also quoted the following five lines from "Power of Sound," making the comment that no five lines "could be farther removed from that simplicity of prose which Wordsworth professes to be his constant aim":

> And shrieks that revel in abuse
> Of shivering flesh; and warbled air,
> Whose piercing sweetness can unloose
> The chains of frenzy or entice a smile
> Into the ambush of despair.[29]

[26] "Morning Exercise," ll. 4–6.
[27] *Ibid.*, ll. 7. [28] *Ibid.*, ll. 27–30. [29] Ll. 9–13.

Most critics will agree that such lines as the foregoing are quite at variance with Wordsworth's doctrine.

In this article in the *Southern Quarterly Review,* the writer also called attention to the absence in Wordsworth's writings of poems based upon the affections.[30] While Wordsworth has a class of poems founded expressly upon them, "this feeling," the reviewer maintained, "is refined into an abstraction." He noted as exceptions, "She dwelt among untrodden ways," "I travelled among unknown men," and the "Affliction of Margaret." He should have included all of the Lucy Poems, "Michael," and the "Brothers."

In an article on Wordsworth in the *New Englander* of November, 1851,[31] consisting of thirty-three pages, only a page is given to "the foibles of the man and the defects of his poetry." The critic admits that Wordsworth

> was self-sufficient to a degree somewhat inconvenient to the sensibilities of those who did not approach him in the attitude of admirers. The habits of mind which led him to dwell in lonely communion with Nature, and to watch the operations of Nature in his own heart, tended to make him abstract and austere in manner. The stiffness with which he held fast to his principles, and the positiveness with which he propounded them, show that he was not pliant in his constitution. He was not a humorist. . . . . His seriousness, doubtless, sometimes degenerated into a kind of mock

[30] Wordsworth "preferred such of his poems as touched the affection to any others; for whatever is didactic . . . . might perish quickly; but whatever combined a truth with an affection, was good today and forever" (*Emerson: English Traits* [Houghton, Mifflin & Co.], p. 26).

[31] IX, 583–616.

solemnity. His satisfaction with his chosen range of thought . . . . the seclusion with which he confined himself to his favorite authors, and would not place himself at the point of view which was occupied by minds unlike his own, must have seemed like narrowness of mind and obstinacy of temper.

This criticism is largely justified. This exclusiveness of taste, however, was the defect of his prime intellectual quality—stability and intensity of purpose.

Wordsworth's attitude toward his favorite authors has been clearly revealed to us both through his own explicit statement and through the statements of others. Elizabeth Wordsworth says that Wordsworth admired "the poets among whom he had grown up. . . . . He admired Homer, Plato, Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton. He admired Burns and delighted in Charles Lamb. . . . . He had a high standard of poetical worth and neither Scott, Byron, Keats, nor Shelley filled the conditions which he had placed before himself."[32] Christopher Wordsworth, in his *Memoirs of William Wordsworth,* quotes directly from the poet concerning this matter:

When I began to give myself to the profession of a poet for life, I was impressed with a conviction that there were four English poets whom I must have continually before me as examples:—Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton. These I must study and equal if I could and I need not think of the rest.

That Wordsworth had a deep regard for Tennyson is revealed to us in a letter which Wordsworth wrote to Henry Reed in 1845.[33] In this letter Wordsworth refers

[32] *Wordsworth,* p. 201.

[33] *Letters of the Wordsworth Family,* III, 319–20.

to Tennyson as being "decidedly the first of our living poets," and expresses the hope that he "will live to give the world still better things."

The critic in the *New Englander,* from whom I quoted concerning Wordsworth's "habits of mind," makes the following statement in regard to the personal element contained in Wordsworth's poetry—a comment evoked by the publication of the *Memoirs of Wordsworth:*

> His poetry is founded on local and personal themes, and often in such a way, that you must put yourself in the place of the writer, and by information other than that which the poem supplies, in order fully to enter into the spirit of his work. The biography [Memoirs] supplies in a good measure this defect. It adds a new interest to the poetry of Wordsworth and will be thought necessary as a commentary on his work.[34]

We find opinions concerning the personal element in Wordsworth's poems in direct contrast to the idea brought out by the writer in the *New Englander.* A critic in the *Christian Examiner* of September, 1851, declares the *Memoirs* are not his life.

> His life is in his poems; his poetry is not only the spirit he lived in, but also it is the record of his existence, of all the chief things he experienced, saw, learned, felt, or thought during eighty years. . . . . Poetry was the window he looked out at the first thing in the morning and it was his business through the day and it was something of the strain he prayed in at night.[35]

Henry Hudson says, "It is interesting to read the biography of Wordsworth as written by himself in his po-

[34] IX, 613.

[35] 4th Ser., XVI, p. 275.

ems."[36] William Knight introduces his "Life of Wordsworth" with the sentence, "Wordsworth's life was in his Poems."[37]

The poetry of Wordsworth is in the largest sense autobiographical. It is the flower of personal experience. To a critic interested in a study of his creative processes such material as was supplied by the *Memoirs* and recently greatly amplified by Harper[38] and Legouis[39] is of great importance.

In 1853, a critic, writing in the *National Magazine*[40] called the attention of his readers to the fact that the poetry of Wordsworth had passed through two stages of criticism, in the first of which his defects were chiefly noted, and in the second his merits. He thought the third stage had now been reached, in which his readers "are just to both." This critic does not object to Wordsworth's limiting his subjects to humble life, but he does object to his thinking that "everything within that domain should interest the entire public." He thinks that Alice Fell's weeping for her tattered cloak would have excited the compassion of any "kindly person witnessing the scene, but it was not worth while to put into a bottle

[36] *Studies in Wordsworth*, p. 126.

[37] *Wordsworth's Poetical Works*, IX, 1.

[38] George McLean Harper, *William Wordsworth* (1916).

[39] Emile Hyacinthe Legouis, (1) *La Jeunesse de William Wordsworth* (1896), translated by J. W. Mathews (1897); (2) *William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon* (1922); (3) *Wordsworth in a New Light* (1923).

[40] III, 37–40.

the tears which were shed for sorrows so light and transitory."

As an alleged further instance of Wordsworth's use of trivialities which are not only unnecessary to the poet's design but "a clog upon it," the *National Magazine* pointed out certain lines in the early version of the "Thorn." The reviewer thought the following lines were introduced for their own intrinsic interest and answered no other purpose, as they were omitted when the poem was revised:

> And to the left, *three yards beyond*
> You see a little muddy pond
> Of water nearly dry:
> I've measured it from side to side,
> 'Tis *three feet long and two feet wide.*[41]

The critic in this article in the *National Magazine* also stated that Wordsworth's characters are not

transcripts of life. . . . As he made his Wanderer the sentimental pedlar, he fancied he should have been himself, so on all other occasions he attended less to what was likely to be thought by his character—than to what *he* should have thought in the same circumstances.—Instead of identifying himself with the sorrows of his agents and receiving their hearts into his own, he appears to stand apart, and to consider them as subjects for poetic and philosophic display. . . . .

[41] The lines now read:

> "And to the left, three yards beyond
> You see a little muddy pond
> Of water—never dry,
> Though but of compass small, and bare
> To thirsty suns and parching air."
>
> —Ll. 29–33

We accept the critic's comments on the Pedlar. Wordsworth himself said:

> Had I been born in a class which would have deprived me of what is called a liberal education, it is not unlikely that, being strong in body, I should have taken to a way of life such as that in which my Pedlar passed the greater part of his days. . . . . I acknowledge that the character I have represented in his person is chiefly an idea of what I fancied my own character might have become in his circumstances. Nevertheless, much of what he says and does had an external existence that fell under my own youthful and subsequent observation. The external suggestions of the Pedlar came from "Patrick," a Scotchman, who married a kinswoman of Mrs. Wordsworth, and a Mr. Fawcett, a preacher at the Old Jewry.[42]

The Wanderer, or the Pedlar, is the Wordsworth of *The Excursion*. "The Solitary" is also as Wordsworth might have been after the French Revolution, had he not been saved from pessimism and misanthropy by the influences of Nature. We would not say, however, with the critic, that we see Wordsworth in all of his characters. While we do not claim for the poet any great dramatic representation of character, we do maintain that he identifies himself with the tragic sorrows of such characters as Margaret, Michael, and the Brothers, and makes these characters stand out as real individuals.

The comments quoted above from the *National Magazine* close the unfavorable criticism found in the secular magazines of the period. Like the unfavorable criticism of the transition period, it contains some truth;

[42] Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, II, 33.

and also like the earlier criticism, is often exaggerated and puts emphasis upon the unimportant.

II

We have noted the large amount of eulogistic comments on Wordsworth and his poetry in the secular magazines of the period, and the small bulk of unfavorable criticism in their pages. We shall now look at the criticism of Wordsworth set forth in the church magazines. Upon the death of Wordsworth these magazines gave the poet special commemoration in their pages and continued to pay him homage for several years. The critics in the religious periodicals saw in Wordsworth a genuine Christian poet—one who believed in a Divine Providence, who was Christ-like in his teachings—who was orthodox in all his religious views.

The *Christian Examiner* of July, 1850,[43] draws a comparison between the life of the "illustrious Psalmist" and that of Wordsworth; both ended in "fullness of days . . . . "; both sat upon thrones, the former on a kingly throne, the latter upon an "inner throne, whose foundation will endure when crowns and scepters have vanished from the globe." The spirit of both "was steeped in Nature's work."

This critic bases his conviction that Wordsworth was a Christian poet upon these facts: He portrays worthily the handiwork of God; he interprets spiritually the "interior realms of man's being and sets forth with elevation the philosophy of our nature"; he is in sympathy

[43] 4th Ser., XIV, 100–110.

with humble life; he is the "poet of humanity,—following in the steps of him who came to preach the gospel to the poor and to seek and to save that which was lost; he espoused the cause of that class who had been hitherto undervalued by most in his vocation and whom the great world would not receive as brethren and equals." This author has the same appreciation of Wordsworth's childhood poems that we noticed in Reed's criticism of Wordsworth; the poet, because of his sympathetic understanding of the child heart is considered by the critic as "a legitimate successor of his spiritual master, preaching in its behalf: 'Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me'."

The highest claim to Wordsworth's title as a "Christian poet," however, is found by this writer in his "devout consecration to the Parent of all"; in the fact that "he came forward as an interpreter between God and man, vindicating the ways of Providence, showing that religion is the only true basis of happiness, the great spring of individual well-being, the chief bond of society, and the inspirer of public as of private intellectual and moral advancement." As an illustration of Wordsworth's "assurance of the instability and worthlessness of all patriotism except that which springs from religious principles," the critic quotes from the poem on the "Obligations of Civil and Religious Liberty."

This writer in the *Christian Examiner* believes that the reading of Wordsworth's poems is a benefit to the moral as well as to the intellectual nature of mankind, and emphasizes a fact mentioned in earlier pages of the

discussion, when we noticed the difference between Wordsworth's poetry and many other writings of the period, that "it is full of a healthful sensibility never sinking into mere sentimentality." The critic makes no attempt to analyze the poetry of Wordsworth; his object is to emphasize its "moral elevation."

In a later volume of the *Christian Examiner,* September, 1851,[44] appears a lengthy article on Wordsworth and his work in connection with the announcement of the publication of the *Memoirs of William Wordsworth,* edited by Henry Reed. Here again, as we have noted in much of the popular criticism of the period, the simplicity of subject and language in Wordsworth's poetry is noted particularly. "He dominates," says the writer, "a small house, a cottage and not a rustic hall as it used to be called in poetry. A nightingale he calls a nightingale and not Philomel, as it once was." The critic speaks of Wordsworth's exquisite regard for common things—the daisy, the coo of the stock-dove, the gleaner, the primrose.

The latter part of the article pays an exceedingly high tribute to Wordsworth. The critic regards the poet as "one of the most heroic characters of the century—one courageously waiting his time, though far off, quite content to forego wealth, so he might live faithfully by his genius,—careless of the praise of men—feeling himself standing full in the eye of God." The critic goes so far as to rank "Wordsworth, singing that *Ode on Immortality* to scornful men, among the martyrs—of the

[44] 4th Ser., XVI, 275–98.

early Church,—that died for the Holy Spirit that was in them." The critic appropriately closes his review with the poet's own words:

> Thou hast left behind
> Powers that will work for thee: air, earth, and skies:
> There's not a breathing of the common wind
> That will forget thee. Thou hast great allies.
> Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
> And love, and man's *unconquerable mind*.[45]

A writer in the *Presbyterian Quarterly Review* for March, 1854,[46] speaks of Wordsworth as being "the purest-minded, most imaginative poet of the nineteenth century," and claims for him a rank with "the illustrious names of Chaucer, Spencer, Shakespeare, and Milton." This critic also brings out an idea which I stressed in chapter iii, when discussing the influence of America's natural environment upon the ultimate favorable reception of Wordsworth in this country. He says, "Born upon the banks of a beautiful river and surrounded from birth by the most glorious scenery of our land, we had long before begun to perceive in Nature 'the presence and the power of greatness.' This youthful impressibility had impelled us to the study of poetry." Thus the writer read successively the works of Moore, Scott, and Byron, in all of which he had taken delight but had failed to find satisfaction of soul. Next the young boy turned to Burns, Thomson, and Cowper; yet still "with a restless sense of want." Turning next to Milton, he found

[45] "Toussaint L'Ouverture."

[46] II, 643–63.

Paradise Lost as far above his "mental condition as *Lalla Rookh* was below it." In his seventeenth year, chance threw in his way a volume of Wordsworth. He says,

> The first piece that . . . . assured us we had found the true poetic interpreter of Nature, was that written "On revisiting the banks of the Wye." We recall, this moment, the mute wonder with which this fine poem was read and re-read. It was as if the voice of an angel had arrested our step amid some favourite rural scene; beside some flowing river or within some venerable wood, and had revealed to us the spirituality of external nature. . . . . We owe to (Wordsworth) not only the ability to recognize in Nature
>
> "A presence that disturbs us with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts,"
>
> but also the ability to read with pleasure the highest efforts of creative genius.

This critic responds sympathetically to Wordsworth's pictures of pastoral life in *The Prelude;* these, he thinks, "have never been surpassed." He calls attention to the stimulus which such life gave to the imagination and quotes:

> Thus was man
> Ennobled outwardly before my sight.
> And thus my heart was early introduced
> To an unconscious love and reverence
> Of human nature; hence the human form
> To me became an index of delight.
> Of grace and honor, power and worthiness.[47]

I wish to call attention to another article in the *Presbyterian Quarterly,* dated June, 1854.[48] This number

[47] Book VIII, ll. 275–81.

[48] III, 69–88.

stresses the religious phase of Wordsworth's work. The critic says,

> It would be well for those who find in Wordsworth nothing but the baldest Pantheism, to expound the following passage from the *Evening Voluntaries:*
>
> ". . . . By grace divine,
> Not otherwise, O Nature, we are thine.
> Vain is the pleasure, a false calm the peace,
> If He, through whom alone our conflicts cease,
> Our virtuous hopes, without relapse advance,
> Come not to speed the soul's deliverance."

In defense of the poet's orthodoxy, the critic quotes the following sonnet which he had memorized "a score of years ago":

> The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed,
> If thou the spirit give by which I pray:
> My unassisted heart is barren clay,
> That of its native self can nothing feed;
> Of good and pious works thou art the seed,
> That quickens only where Thou say'st it may;
> Unless Thou show to us thine own true way,
> No man can find it: Father! thou must lead;
> Do thou, then, breathe those thoughts into my mind,
> By which such virtue may in me be bred,
> That in thy holy footsteps I may tread;
> The fetters of my tongue to Thou unbind,
> That I may have the power to sing of thee,
> And sound thy praises everlastingly.

This writer claims for Wordsworth the place "as a pioneer and successful laborer in the great work of pervading the English mind with spiritual sentiments in opposition to those which are sensational and material. The

triumph of sensationalism was complete," he states, "when Wordsworth and Coleridge, *par nobile fratrum,* entered the lists upon the side of spiritualism, the one its poetic, the other its prose expounder." The writer holds the view that "in the enunciation of the leading principles of spiritualism, Wordsworth is chronologically entitled to take precedence of Coleridge." He gives quotations from "Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches" to show that, in his earliest poems, Wordsworth "exalts the spirit over matter." Other early poems mentioned as containing the "germs of spiritualism are 'Guilt and Sorrow' and the touching story of 'Margaret.'" These poems, the critic maintains, show "that the foundation principles of that philosophy which Coleridge afterward so ably argued, were laid in Wordsworth's mind before their intimacy began. The celebrated lines above "Tintern Abbey," which contain the elements of spiritualism as fully as anything he ever wrote, were composed immediately subsequent to the first visit which Coleridge makes him; "but whoever," says this writer, "will study this fine poem will be constrained to admit . . . . that it is but the natural outgrowth of notions long familiar to his mind." The writer does not disclaim the admission that Wordsworth was greatly indebted to Coleridge "in attaining just and profound views of truth"; but he thinks that in the early stages of their intimacy, Coleridge received from Wordsworth "even in respect of the principles of a spiritual philosophy" much more than he imparted.

The critic continued,

The first prose work of Coleridge, in which the sensational philosophy was attacked, appeared June 1, 1809, twelve years after his intimacy with Wordsworth began. . . . . But whilst with unremitting toil, he was working his way to the serene atmosphere and resplendent life of a higher philosophy, Wordsworth, with not less toil, and with equally generous devotion to truth, was filling the English mind with thoughts utterly subversive of sensationalism, and thoroughly promotive of an antagonistic system. We refer to his works, especially to *The Excursion* and more especially to the fourth book for ample justification of our statement.

All of these writers utterly ignore chronology in the discussion of Wordsworth. Their zeal for moral and religious elevation blinds them to poetic banality.

I shall close my discussion of the magazine criticism of this period, 1850–60, by giving the verdict of Wordsworth's rank as a poet expressed by a critic in *Harper's Magazine* for December, 1859.[49] He relates that in London there had been a debate upon the question as to the six English poets who were entitled to statues in Westminster Abbey. There was no doubt as to the first four: Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. But it was not so easy to decide whether the eighteenth century should be represented by Dryden or Pope or the nineteenth by Byron or Wordsworth. Of these four the American critic thought

there can be little doubt that Wordsworth is best entitled to the honor. If the great poet be the man who conveys the most profound and universal thought in the most simple and adequate manner,—whose imagination is created and sustained—whose sympathies are as broad as nature and mankind—there is no question

[49] XX, 127.

that Wordsworth better satisfies the conditions than any since Milton.

III

I have noted the criticism made by our poets in the period of transition; I wish to turn to them again, in this later period, to observe their attitude toward the poet who was so loudly praised in the magazines of the time. In general, their criticism is marked by sincere appreciation and discriminating judgment.

Longfellow, writing in his journal, August 21, 1850,[50] stated: "We have finished Wordsworth's *Prelude*. It has many lofty passages. It soars and sinks, and is by turns sublime and common-place. It is Wordsworth as he was at the age of thirty-five or forty." In this statement Longfellow reveals his continued interest in Wordsworth and the same sanity and discrimination noted in his remarks in his notebook in 1829.[51]

Whittier beautifully expressed his appreciation of Wordsworth's life and poetry in a poem written in 1851:

WORDSWORTH[52]

Dear friends, who read the world aright,
And in its common forms discern
A beauty and a harmony
The many never learn!

[50] Samuel Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, II, 175.

[51] See chapter iv.

[52] *Poems* (James R. Osgood & Co.), p. 162.

Kindred in soul of him who found
In simple flower and leaf and stone
The impulse of the sweetest lays
Our Saxon tongue has known,—

Accept this record of a life
As sweet and pure, as calm and good,
As a long day of blandest June
In green field and in wood.

How welcome to our ears, long pained
By strife of sect and party noise,
The brook-like murmur of his song
Of Nature's simple joys!

The violet by the mossy stone,
The primrose by the river's brim,
And chance-sown daffodil, have found
Immortal life through him.

The sunrise on his breezy lake,
The rosy tints his sunset brought,
World-seen, are gladdening all the vales
And mountain-peaks of thought.

Art builds on sand; the works of pride
And human passion change and fall;
But that which shares the life of God
With him surviveth all.

The rich simplicity of many of Wordsworth's Nature poems, his freedom from the artificial, the moral tone of his poetry, and the calm, meditative tone of Wordsworth would naturally strike a responsive chord in the heart of our Quaker poet, and much that he thought and felt is expressed in these simple stanzas.

In his *Journal,* July 8, 1851,[53] Thoreau records a Nature impression made upon him as he was coming out of town—an impression made by the Charles River: "When I saw the fair, still water this cloudy evening, suggesting the way to eternal peace and beauty—the placid, lake-like fresh water, I was reminded of the way in which Wordsworth so coldly speaks of some natural visions or scenes 'giving him pleasure.'" In a letter in 1854, to his friend, Harrison Blake,[54] we find Thoreau still with Wordsworth in mind. He thus expresses himself: "I have spent a rather unprofitable summer thus far. I have been too much with the world, as the poet might say." In making this offhand allusion to Wordsworth's sonnet, "The World Is Too Much With Us," we note Thoreau's continued interest in Wordsworth's poetry and his accepted familiarity with it.

We also find two comments on Wordsworth in Emerson's *Journals* during this period. In 1856 Emerson is defending Wordsworth: "I find nothing in the disparaging speeches of the Londoners about him that would not easily be said of a faithful scholar who rated things after his own scale, and not by the conventional. He almost alone in his generation has treated the mind well."[55] Undoubtedly Emerson is here referring to *The Prelude.* In an entry in his journal for 1858, Emerson refers to *The Prelude* as an "immortal pamphlet."[56] No longer do we find hostility toward the poet, but complete confidence.

[53] II, 295.

[54] *Familiar Letters* (Riverside ed.), II, 275.

[55] IX, 53.

[56] *Ibid.,* p. 152.

In a facetious mood, Lowell writes the following humorous letter from Dresden, October 14, 1855, to W. J. Stillman:

When I get over here it is the Styx that is between me and America. I have drunk Lethe water to wash down nepenthe with, and have forgotten everything but my old friends, like a happy Shade. What care we careless Spirits for what troubled us—still more for what might have troubled us in the flesh. "My little man," says Wordsworth to Pope, when they met in the Fortunate Islands, "I am sorry to say,"—the wretch! he was not sorry a bit —"that your poems are not so much read as once." "My what? Ah, poems—yes, I think I *did* write some things once. And so they don't read 'em, eh? 'Tis all one for that—I wouldn't read 'em myself. Come in here with me, Mr. . . . . a— a— I beg your pardon—ah, Wordsworth? Yes, come in, Mr. Wordsworth, and try the Lethe; 'tis the best spring in the place, and you will meet some eminent characters in the pump-room. . . . ."[57]

In 1854 James Russell Lowell delivered at the Lowell Institute, Boston, a series of lectures on the English poets. These lectures marked Lowell as the greatest American critic of the nineteenth century. Later the lectures were published in collections of essays—*My Study Windows, Among My Books,* and, in the final edition, of Lowell's works, as *Literary Essays.* Through the lectures and essays Lowell did more than any other American writer of the nineteenth century to spread literary information and literary culture in this country. The essays are marked by extensive reading experience, a responsive humor, discrimination in taste, rich fancy, striking and stimulating allusions and figures, and the critic's own robust, vigorous, and brilliant personality.

[57] *Lowell Letters,* edited by Charles Eliot Norton, pp. 244–45.

In the essay on Wordsworth, of 1854, which prefaces an edition of Wordsworth's poems of that year,[58] we noted in chapter iii, Lowell's criticism on Wordsworth's Preface. We wish now to look at other points brought out in this essay. Lowell can never be consistently serious. He must intersperse humor in the midst of his critical judgment, of which the following extract is an example:

> Lord Byron describes himself as waking one morning and finding himself famous and it is quite an ordinary fact, that a blaze may be made with a little salt petre that will be stared at by thousands who would have thought the sunrise tedious. Wordsworth might have said that he woke and found himself infamous, for the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* undoubtedly raised him to the distinction of being the most unpopular poet in England. Parnassus has two peaks; the one where improvising poets cluster; the other where the singer of deep secrets sits alone,—a peak veiled sometimes from the whole morning of a generation by earth-born mists and smoke of kitchen-fires, only to glow the more consciously at sunset, and after nightfall to crown itself with imperishable stars. Wordsworth had that self-trust which in the man of genius is sublime and in the man of talent insufferable. With all the reviewers in a chorus of laughter behind him, he went to Germany to write more *Lyrical Ballads,* and to begin a poem on the growth of his own mind, at a time when there were only two men in the world (himself and Coleridge) who were aware that he had one, or at least one anywise differing from those mechanically uniform ones which are stuck drearily side by side on the great pinpaper of society.

The following criticism is also taken from Lowell's essay on Wordsworth. Wordsworth

[58] See *British Poets,* "Wordsworth" (Little, Brown & Co., 1854 and 1859), I, xxi–xxii.

wrote too much to always write well; for it is not always a great Xerxes-army of words, but a compact Greek ten-thousand that marches safely down to posterity. He set tasks to his divine faculty, which is much the same as trying to make Jove's eagle do the service of a clucking hen. Throughout the *Prelude* and the *Excursion* he seems striving to bind the wizard Imagination with the sand-ropes of dry disquisition, and to have forgotten the potent spellword which would make the particles cohere. There is an arenaceous quality in the style which makes progress wearisome. Yet with what splendors as of mountain-sunsets are we rewarded! What golden rounds of verse do we not see stretching heavenward with angels ascending and descending! What haunting melodies hover around us deep and eternal like the undying barytone of the sea! and if we are compelled to fare through sands and desert wildernesses, how often do we not hear airy shapes that syllable our names with a startling personal appeal to our highest consciousness and our noblest aspiration, such as we wait for in vain in any other poet![59]

No deeper appreciation could be expressed nor higher tribute paid than is given at the close of this essay:

Our language owes him gratitude for the purity and abstinence of his style and we who speak it, for having emboldened us to take delight in simple things and to trust ourselves to our own instincts; he is now enrolled as fifth in the succession of the great English poets.

In his essay on Italy,[60] Lowell shows his sympathetic imagination and reverence toward the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," that "high-water mark of Wordsworth's genius." Lowell refers to it as "that wondrous ode of Wordsworth which arouses and stirs in the soul all its dormant instincts of resurrection, as with a sound of the last trumpet."

[59] P. 38.

[60] *Literary Essays* (1854), I, 128.

All of the criticisms of Lowell show that he had studied Wordsworth carefully; that he knew him thoroughly. He speaks as one with authority. A great admirer of the English poet, he was yet not blind to his faults. The testimony of this competent, cultivated, and discriminating critic is further evidence of the interest which the best minds in America had in Wordsworth. The aim of Lowell, as he stated in the prefatory note to his *Literary Essays*,[61] was to stimulate interest in the study of all the poets. To promote an interest in Wordsworth was the aim also of Reed, Whipple, Tuckerman, and the various magazine reviews. That this aim produced effective results is acknowledged in the words of a critic writing for the *North American Review*, October, 1851:[62] "No country contains a larger number of intelligent admirers of Wordsworth's genius than our own."

[61] Vol. I. [62] LXXIII, 494.

CONCLUSION

In the criticism which has been presented, we have seen that while Wordsworth was appreciated by the discriminating few from the beginning of his poetic career, America, on the whole, either neglected him altogether or regarded him with an aspect of indifference until 1824. In that year, the magazine reviewers, taking their cue partly from the changed attitude of the English critics, awoke, as if from a long Rip Van Winklish sleep, during which they had been oblivious of what was taking place in the poetic world, to the realization that Wordsworth really was a great genius whose poems were worth reading. They proceeded to peruse these productions carefully and thus discover for themselves their intrinsic worth. These American critics were now no longer afraid to speak out, since they had the favorable criticism of the leading English magazines to give them moral and intellectual backing. Some of them were probably humiliated by being obliged to confess their tardy recognition and thus acknowledge their lack of independent aesthetic appreciation.

In 1824, the American magazines came forth with apologies for the neglect of Wordsworth, a neglect which had been common to their countrymen, and, giving much space to Wordsworth reviews, succeeded in overcoming the indifference of the reading public and helped to awaken an interest in the English poet and his works,

which became as great as that in his own country. The increase in the number of readers and admirers of Wordsworth in America from 1824 to 1860 is indicated by the greater amount of space given in the magazines to the discussion of the poet and his poems; by the greater demand for his works; and by the Wordsworth lectures given and essays produced by the leading critics of the time, including the greatest of all American critics of the nineteenth century, James Russell Lowell.

The slow advance of Wordsworth's fortunes in this country we have seen were due to a number of causes. Always servile to European literary opinions, America, in her attitude of neglect, indifference, and even hostility toward the poet, during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, reflected the attitude of British critics, paricularly of the *Edinburgh Review* and of the popular idol, Byron.

In studying the American culture of the first half of the nineteenth century, we have noted certain forces which were inimical to the interests of Wordsworth and others which were favorable to an appreciation of his work. We have seen a buoyant people seeking the exciting and sensational in moments of aesthetic relaxation. Such would naturally not be interested in a poet whose aspiration mounted to a

> . . . . yearning toward some philosophic Song
> Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;
> With meditations passionate from deep
> Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
> Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre.[1]

[1] *The Prelude,* Book I, ll. 228–33.

We have seen, too, a sentimental people, who reveled in a madness of joy and tears as Ole Bull played upon their hearts; who delighted in the exaggerated "puffery" which followed in the wake of his music; who were enchanted with the pathos, tenderness, and picturesqueness of Jennie Lind's songs; and were deeply moved by the saccharine sentiment and graveyard atmosphere which pervaded the writings of Mrs. Sigourney and Mrs. Hemans. To such, the poems of Wordsworth, quite out of sympathy with "sickly sentimentality," would make little appeal.

Another class of people of the period, the more conservative type, clung to the artificial and conventional poetry of Pope and his school, stilted in form and ornate in expression, far removed from the sublime simplicity of Wordsworth's work with its sincere and soulful treatment of Nature and humble life, with its subtle mysticism, and exalted thought.

Counterbalancing these inimical forces, we have noted other inherent, serious, durable qualities in American life: moral and religious idealism, which were impelling factors in turning the American mind to Wordsworth. America was throbbing with the same democratic principles found in Wordsworth's poetry, which honored and respected the indomitable mind, wherever found, and elevated the things of common life to poetic theme.

We have seen that the later moral and religious poetry of Wordsworth, especially that dominating *The Excursion,* made a strong appeal to the Puritanic idealism of America.

Another important force in advancing the fortunes of Wordsworth in America we have seen to be found in the spread of culture in this country brought about by the increased publication of good books, establishment of public libraries, improvement societies of various kinds, by lectures given by many of the most representative minds of America and Europe, and by the influence of our poets.

Not the least of the educational influences of the period is due to the early American criticism which we have noted. It aroused an interest in Wordsworth and his poetry and thus was a factor in revolutionizing the literary taste of America.

That the poetry of Wordsworth itself was instrumental in revolutionizing the character of American poetry is an idea expressed by a writer in the *Southern Quarterly Review* of September, 1850:[2]

> In America the influence of Wordsworth's poetry has been more general than in England. That communion with Nature which he originated has been carried to extremes. Every tree and leaf and stream, every hill, valley and cloud, have become vocal instructors. Intercourse with human kind has almost ceased in American poetry, and in its place there is a perpetual interrogation of the shadows which haunt our mental consciousness, and of the unseen lips that syllable men's names in the world without. This extravagance, however, is a harmless one, and it will correct itself. . . . . There certainly can be no risk in making too much of the motions of a cloud, or of the ripple of a stream.

The dissemination of this American poetry so strongly influenced by Wordsworth, in some cases imitative of

[2] O.S., XVIII, 21–22.

him, helped to create a taste for Wordsworth's own poetry.

We have previously noted in this study that Wordsworth was interested in America and had a number of close friends in this country. That he was appreciative of the favorable reception of his work in America is revealed to us in a letter written by him to Henry Reed in 1837:

> It is gratifying to one whose aim as an author has been to search the hearts of his fellow-creatures of all ranks and in all stations to find that he has succeeded in any quarter; and still more must he be gratified to learn that he has pleased in a distant country, men of simple habits and cultivated taste who are at the same time widely acquainted with literature.[3]

[3] *Letters of the Wordsworth Family* (Knight), III, 139.

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[1] In each instance the date represents the earliest edition to which I have had access.

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